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“The Legitimation of the European Parliament -
A Comparative Assessment of Newspaper Contents and Their
Effects in Three European Union Member States“

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Abbreviations

ACTA	Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement
AfD	Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany)
AL	Aamulehti
APA	Austrian Press Agency
AUTNES	Austrian National Election Study
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
COSAC	Conference of Parliamentary Committees for EU Affairs
DE	Germany
EB	Eurobarometer
EC	European Community
ECB	European Central Bank
ECJ	European Court of Justice
ECR	European Conservatives and Reformists
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EES	European Election Survey
EFDD	Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
FAZ	Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung
FDP	Freie Demokratische Partei
FI	Finland
HI	Historical Institutionalism
HS	Helsingin Sanomat
IL	Italehti
MEP	Member of the European Parliament

MP.....Member of (national) Parliament
NP.....National Parliament
PACE.....Parliamentary Communication of Europe
PIREDEU.....Providing an Infrastructure for Research on Electoral
Democracy in the European Union
SZ.....Süddeutsche Zeitung
UK.....United Kingdom
UKIP.....United Kingdom Independence Party

1 The European Parliament: Nourishing a Democratic Mirage

In the beginnings of what has become the European Union (EU) today, its parliamentary assembly was installed as a body 'that possessed "executive" control powers (censure motion)' (Rittberger, 2003: 213) vis-à-vis the High Authority, the heart of supranational governance which later was named European Commission. The parliamentary assembly was not expected to play an important role in community life but was merely meant to provide a means to check supranational power as a novelty in the proposed institutional cooperation between European nation states (Beesley, 1963; Rittberger, 2003, 2014). Already in this first treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951, direct elections were incorporated in the sense that the 'Assembly' was defined to

'be composed of delegates whom the parliaments of each of the member States shall be called upon to designate once a year from among their own membership, or who shall be elected by direct universal suffrage, according to the procedure determined by each respective High Contracting Party (Treaty constituting the European Coal and Steel Community, Chapter II, Article 10).

Until 1979, members of the European Parliament (MEPs) indeed had a dual mandate in national parliaments and at EU level (Lodge, 1986). However, as the scope of cooperation expanded, the limited democratic control and the lack of a directly-elected institution representing citizens' interests in supranational decision-making became contested: '[M]ore and more, the decisions that affect the standard of living, the comfort, perhaps the peace of Europeans, are taken outside the centres where sit the "representatives of the people"' (Beesley, 1963: 81). Advocates of direct elections thought of them as an effective way to raise awareness of a largely ignorant citizenry and bring home the elite project of European integration that essentially was an 'affair of a few thousand militants' (Beesley, 1963: 82).

Back then, however, European integration was more about economic interests, a common market; 'the creation of a European legal system was driven by the demand for adjudication of economic disputes between firms' (Hooghe and Marks, 2009: 5). Therefore, member states of the European Community (EC) were hesitant to push for a democratisation of this system by installing a directly elected representation of citizens. In addition, MEPs had

signalled their legislative aspirations and member states feared an uncontrollable empowerment leading to the usurpation of national parliaments and the weakening of national sovereignty. Based on the normative claim of the 'enhancement of democracy' that a directly elected European Parliament (EP) could bring, and driven by the ambition of MEPs themselves, direct elections were nonetheless agreed upon which in itself was a huge and remarkable step in the course of European integration (Lodge, 1986; also Hix, 2002a).

With direct elections in 1979, then, an unparalleled success story unfolded. Subsequent treaty reforms witnessed the stepwise extension of the EP's powers. No other institution at EU level has managed to extend its scope of competencies to the same extent as the EP. Compared to other similar institutions, it is today regarded as one of the most powerful parliaments in the world which is, in most policy areas, legislating on a par with the Council in which member states' governments are represented (Rittberger, 2014). It has become an attractive place to start and develop a political career (Whitaker, 2014) and has demonstrated more than once that it is indeed a political player to be reckoned with. An impressive example still is the resignation of the Santer Commission which, accused of corruption, left office in 1999 after the EP had threatened to move a censure motion against it (e.g. Topan, 2002). More recently, the majority of MEPs rejected the extremely contested Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) following massive public opposition and thereby rejected the EU's governments' agreement. It also possesses and has used the power to effectively block EU budget negotiations whereby it can press member states to make concessions (e.g., Hix, 2013).

All its undoubtedly impressive achievements, however, are dwarfed by the fact that this powerful parliament still appears to be built on sand: 'While [the EP] has steadily increased its powers in the legislative and inter-institutional arrangements of the EU, it has not yet succeeded in translating its authority into a more visible role amongst Europe's electorates' (Van Hulten and Clegg, 2003: 4 cited in Crum and Fossum, 2009: 251). Overall, voter turnout continuously decreases and EP elections have always been perceived as second-order or national test elections (e.g., Hix and Marsh, 2007; Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Schmitt and

Toygür, 2016): National topics dominate the agenda rather than genuine European ones, and no matter how intensely political elites try to fan it, an enthusiasm for EP elections does not seem to ignite. Thus, elections do not seem to have the envisaged consequences with regard to raising public awareness for the elite project (Beesley, 1963; also Van der Brug and De Vreese, 2016a).

In addition, the results of such second-order elections increasingly show that citizens have started caring about European politics – however, in a negative way. This is expressed in fierce opposition to the EU which is demonstrated in the streets by protest movements channelling frustration about austerity policies, high levels of unemployment amongst especially young people and an unprecedented wave of refugees (e.g., Hobolt and Tilley, 2016; Kriesi and Pappas, 2015; Laffan, 2016). The most recent climax of Euroscepticism was reached when a slim majority of British voters decided for the United Kingdom to leave the EU in the so called Brexit referendum in June 2016 (Hobolt, 2016). Overall, the famously diagnosed permissive consensus (Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970) describing citizens' *laissez-faire* attitude towards EU politics has turned into a dissensus constraining elites in the form of growing Euroscepticism (Hooghe and Marks, 2009). As a result, political parties are empowered that strive towards further undermining the legitimacy of the EP and the European project more generally (Conti, 2014).

Further contesting the legitimacy of the EP as the EU's parliamentary assembly, also the role of national parliaments as alternative or complementary sources of legitimacy for EU politics is increasingly discussed in politics and academic research (Auel and Raunio, 2014a, 2014b; Auel et al., 2016; Benz, 2016; Crum and Fossum, 2009; Rauh, 2014; Wendler, 2016). Their role, however, is still difficult to define, also due to the extreme differences in scrutiny strength concerning EU issues: While some parliaments get to mandate governmental actors, for example before EU summits, others can but rubberstamp the decisions in hindsight (Auel et al., 2015b; see Hefftler et al., 2015 for an extensive overview). Moreover, in some policy areas, it remains rather undefined how competencies are shared between the EU and the national level, and especially strong parliaments are found to oppose a strong(er)

EP (Winzen et al., 2014). Therefore, the nature of the relationship between the EP and national parliaments may differ between complementary, competing or co-operating.

Against this background and the ongoing debate about the EU's democratic deficit, the empowerment of the EP seems to have nourished a democratic mirage – pointing to a safe harbour of legitimate democratic governance from the distance, but fading away when the institutional preconditions that were considered necessary for increasing legitimacy had finally been established. The main reason for this appears to be the weak link of the EU's political decision-makers to the constituency of the EU member states' mass democracies. The question, thus, is how we can explain this weak link.

Considering that politicians in mass democracies cannot engage so much in personal conversation if they want to effectively reach their mass electorate, it is the mass media that serve as an institutionalised nexus communicating political actors' messages to the public and mirroring public opinion back to political actors. Thus, they are the interface establishing the link between representatives and their electorate. As such, media may be seen as a supportive means for public debate – for democracy in its pursuit of critically evaluating itself and re-assessing the standards according to which it works: They can 'be said to build a 'representative relationship' between those who 'perform' in the political arena and those who interpret and evaluate the performance from the balcony' (Michailidou and Trenz 2012: 135; also Habermas, 1962; Hurrelmann, 2014; Shoemaker, 2006). However, media organisations have their own standards of what is worthy of being published and what is not. They compete on a news market and depend on audience. They filter and influence news contents in terms of issues' visibility and the tone of evaluations and, therefore, actively *make* news that shape attitudes towards Europe (e.g., Page, 1996; Trenz, 2004, 2007; Trenz et al. 2009).

Scholars argued that looking into media contents about the EU is 'a prerequisite for assessing the well-being of democratic processes in Europe and for informing the ongoing discussion about the EU's democratic ... deficit' (De Vreese et al., 2006: 478). Indeed, news contents are a container of legitimisation discourses rather easily accessible for research

concerned with the empirically observable legitimacy of political regimes. However, academia has paid rather little attention to public communication about the EP, also with reference to national parliaments and their role in EU affairs. This seems surprising given the apparent significance of public discourse, the immediate importance of a parliament for democracy, and the still undefined relationship of different parliamentary levels in the EU.

Already in 2003, Hix et al. stated that, '[w]e know very little about public perceptions of, and attitudes towards, the EP. Thus, we also know little about whether Parliament does or can help legitimise the EU in the manner attributed to elected legislatures in other contexts' (Hix et al., 2003: 197). This situation has not changed much and is even truer for the discussion about the EP's media visibility and its effects: Recent contributions to the discussion have returned sophisticated and insightful results (e.g., Gattermann, 2011, 2013; Gattermann and Vasilopoulou, 2015; Nardis, 2015), but they are still scarce. Furthermore, there seems to be a considerable research gap regarding the multilevel characteristics of representation in the EU. In sum, we do not know much about what information the media deliver or what evaluations they suggest when it comes to the EP's legitimacy, how well the EP manages to become visible in the news, also in comparison to national parliaments, how the quality and quantity of news reporting about the EP differs between member states, and what actual effect these contents have on public support. Thus, the actual process of the EP's legitimation through the media is quite underexplored while it is exactly this content that could help us understand and explain the weakness of the link between the parliament and its citizens.

In an attempt to tackle these research gaps, the thesis explores this legitimation process in looking at *the quality, quantity, and the effects of newspaper contents about the EP*. In addition, it takes the public activities of the EP and assesses their impact on the amount of news: Acknowledging national parliaments as alternative sources of legitimacy, this specific analysis *compares the news visibility of the EP* with that of *national parliaments in EU affairs*.

The analysis is designed in a comparative fashion, looking at three exemplary EU member states with regard to their parliamentary traditions: Finland, Germany, and the United

Kingdom. This is against the background that '[t]he impact of the national parliamentary culture is arguably the strongest determiner of EP news coverage affecting coverage, content and evaluations by the press' (Gattermann, 2011: 27). Furthermore, four different points in time are considered: the EP elections of 2009 and 2014 and routine periods in 2011 and 2012 which are contrasted to understand how elections as key events may bias the volume and tone of EP news. In analysing these data, the thesis takes a quantitative stance employing regression models testing formulated expectations derived from the literature.

Outline of the Thesis

To tackle the proposed questions, the thesis proceeds as follows. In *chapter 2*, we reflect upon the broader normative implications of the EU's democratic deficit and the concept of legitimacy. We highlight the importance of mass communication and the media for democracy in the EU and define 'legitimation' as a process of communication for the purpose of acquiring, maintaining, or withdrawing legitimacy. In the remainder of the section, we discuss the empirical literature with regard to communication by and about parliaments as well as its effects. On that basis, we identify research gaps and formulate question to be addressed in the thesis.

In *chapter 3*, the broader analytical framework is introduced. Overall, the study of the EP's legitimation process touches upon different disciplines – namely legislative and communication studies. Despite the obvious overlap, however, the two strands stand largely disconnected which is why we propose a poliheuristic (PH) approach: It was originally developed for the analysis of foreign policy decisions (Mintz et al., 1994; Mintz, 2004b) and is adapted in this thesis to the study of parliamentary communication and its effects. The approach is built on a two stage model of decision-making where the first is a cognitive processing of information resulting in a viable subset of alternatives. The second stage, then, includes a rational maximising of utilities on the basis of that subset constrained or incentivised by the surrounding environment. We complement the PH approach with Historical Institutionalism (HI) as an established theory in political science explicitly

incorporating the idea of contingency. In doing this, we are able to integrate results from more rationally and more sociologically oriented research (Hall and Taylor, 1996).

The basic PH model of decision-making – like the rational choice model, too – is ‘content-free’ and, therefore, needs empirical contextualisation for formulating hypotheses. For this reason, we proceed with a review of the literature concerning the EP (chapter 3.2.1), the media (chapter 3.2.2), and public opinion (chapter 3.2.3) for the purpose of collecting contextualising information. The three chapters discuss findings on external incentives or constraints and individual cognitive predispositions. The focus, thus, is set on the individual decision-maker; we will, however, use the approach at an aggregate level and look at collectives of decision-makers – at parliamentarians operating in parliaments as institutions, at journalists as a collective actor united in, e.g., a newspaper organization, and at citizens as the broader ‘group’ of society governed in a polity. Each chapter respectively starts with a discussion of the macro context in which parliaments, newspapers and citizens are situated, i.e. societal functions and expectations. We then proceed to the meso level looking at the structures that constrain or incentivise journalists and parliaments in maintaining their legitimacy. In the case of citizens, we look at constraints and incentives that they are exposed to when evaluating the EP as legitimate or what motivates them to participate in EU politics. Finally, we proceed to the literature on cognitive predispositions of parliamentarians, journalists, and citizens. In doing this, we reach the micro level or the first stage of decision-making as described in the PH model.

Concluding, chapter 3.3 draws together results and integrates findings into an overarching analytical framework combining elements from communication and political science. However, since we only look at certain aspects of the EP’s legitimation, we understand the developed framework also as a contribution to future discussion about how to theorise communication studies. Lastly, implications of using a PH approach are reflected upon.

Chapter 4 clarifies the overall methodological considerations which serve as the basis for the empirical investigation of the EP’s legitimacy. That concerns the different empirical dimensions of legitimacy research: An attitudinal, behavioural, and discursive dimension.

The thesis focusses on the attitudinal and discursive dimension while the behavioural dimension is implicitly reflected in the contextualising of hypotheses and results. Moreover, the chapter gives a detailed account of the case selection regarding the period of analysis, countries and newspapers. The chapter also sheds light on the coding process providing information on search strings and databases used for data retrieval; moreover, it describes the variables coded and presents reliability scores for them. The methods used for processing descriptive data presented in chapter 5 are introduced here as well. Specific methods used for conducting our explanatory analyses (chapter 6 and 7) are elaborated in the respective empirical chapters.

In *chapter 5*, we turn to an evaluation of content data for which we on the one hand use a cluster analysis to arrange findings on the visibility of the EP. On the other hand, we present results of a legitimization statement analysis giving insights to how the EP's legitimacy is evaluated in the news. Results show that the discourse is more concentrated in election periods and is heavily biased towards a national angle. The framing of the EP's legitimacy is rather faint and negative, focusing on the EP as an institution or single MEPs. Justifications to evaluate the EP negatively or positively seem to often focus on the EP's lack of transparency or credibility and the (good or bad) charisma of single MEPs or their lack of political moderation.

Chapter 6 sheds light on the discussion about which parliamentary level has the greater potential to actually reach citizens via the media and thereby contribute to enhancing EU legitimacy. It develops hypotheses to explore the visibility of the EP and national parliaments in EU affairs explicitly comparing their success or failure to make it into the news. Using their public activities as a proxy for their efforts to become visible, we employ two regression models for the news visibility of the EP and national parliaments in EU affairs separately. Findings suggest a greater newsworthiness of national parliaments. In addition, journalists seem to perceive the two levels mainly as independent parliamentary branches of EU politics.

Chapter 7 is an explicit assessment of how well the EP may reach its citizens: It establishes hypotheses to explore the effects of newspaper contents on public support for the EP and tests them connecting content data with the EES voter study of 2009 and 2014. In doing so, we assume the awareness of politics or the EP in particular to be a crucial moderator of news susceptibility regarding the visibility and tone of coverage. Our results show that the EP's visibility in the media used to moderately increase support in 2009, but only with citizens aware of EP elections. However, the crisis seems to have altered the political climate in a way that has made citizens more susceptible to EP news 5 years later. This conclusion is based on the finding that in 2014, citizens were directly affected by the evaluations of the EP transported in coverage.

In *chapter 8*, we summarise the contributions of the thesis concerning the analytical framework and empirical findings. In addition, we reflect on shortcomings of the thesis and suggest avenues for future research. Moreover, we discuss our results regarding the EP's potential to help legitimise EU politics. This specifically concerns a possible division of labour between the EP and national parliaments in the legitimisation process. We conclude the thesis with impulses for future discussion about the EP's status in the EU polity and its possible contributions to further legitimating it.

2 Deficient Democracy? Legitimacy and Communication in the EU

This chapter serves to set our research in context. We start with a discussion of the EU's democratic deficit, zooming in in more detail on key concepts such as legitimacy and why parliaments are important for democracy. We highlight the importance of communication and how it is the communication deficit that seems to lie at the root of the EP's link with its constituency. We then proceed to taking stock of the empirical literature researching communication by parliaments, about parliaments, and its effects. As mentioned earlier, the literature discussing the EP explicitly is rather scarce, which is why we resort to research on

the EU and parliaments, too. The final section, then, formulates our research questions to tackle identified gaps in the literature.

2.1 The Greater Normative Context: The EU's Democratic Deficit

In 1998, Majone observed that the '[w]idespread concern about the democratic deficit of European integration is a fairly recent phenomenon' (Majone, 1998: 12). This maybe was the reason for scholars to contest the existence of such a deficit altogether: Following Majone's argumentation, economic and political integration should be kept as separated as possible in order to keep European politics un-politicised. In return, the sovereignty of the nation state would remain intact and ultimately, the democratic deficit of the EU, as described above, would be 'democratically justified': The EU would be a technocratic regime with institutions that are delegated narrowly defined competencies in non-redistributive policy areas. This, he justified, was the only possible option since as 'long as the majority of voters and their elected representatives oppose the idea of a European federation, while supporting far-reaching economic integration, we cannot expect parliamentary democracy [and majoritarian rule, O.E.] to flourish in the Union' (Majone, 1998: 5; also Caporaso, 1996, Dehousse, 1998, Majone, 2009). A similar opinion was presented by Andrew Moravcsik (1998) who claimed that 'the EC can be analysed as a successful intergovernmental regime designed to manage economic interdependence through negotiated policy co-ordination' (Moravcsik, 1993: 474). In his view, the EP had been strengthened enough to counterbalance the Commission's potential dominance over state interests in supranational policy areas (Moravcsik, 1998, 2002; see Follesdal and Hix, 2006 for an overview).

It seems that Majone was right in recommending the separation of economy and politics. Ever since the foundations of a political along with an economic union were laid with the treaty of Maastricht, the EU has encountered numerous crises, rejections of reform treaties in referenda, and an increased contestation of its existence. Politicians, thus, could not count on a permissive consensus (Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970) of European citizens anymore. Instead, they had to take normative questions into consideration (Castiglione and Bellamy

2000) to deal with an increasingly constraining dissensus of the European public (Hooghe and Marks, 2009).

The main discussion nowadays seems to revolve around the question of how to address the democratic deficit rather than contesting its existence. Still, *the* democratic deficit is not easily captured. Differences in accounts of the democratic deficit and how to alleviate it are born out of differences in observers' standards of democratic legitimacy and their ultimate concept of the EU as an emerging polity (Majone, 1998: 5; see Follesdal, 2004 for an elaborate overview). However, three main aspects of a 'standard account' of the democratic deficit may be summarised. Although written 10 years ago (Follesdal and Hix, 2006), it can still be used to approach this phenomenon and we take up the aspects described throughout the thesis to discuss the literature and the results of our empirical analyses.

Firstly, there has been a shift of powers in favour of the executives and at the expense of legislatures (e.g., Andersen and Burns, 1996). But '[w]hile ... [this] may improve... policies by producing better outputs, it reduces legitimacy on the input side as decisions are taken further away from the citizens' (Kraft-Kasack, 2008: 534). Relating to this, a second key problem was the weakness of the EU's parliament. As a reaction to this discussion, the EP has been empowered in the course of integration (Rittberger, 2005, 2014) to an equal partner of the intergovernmental Council in a majority of policy areas. Finally, EP elections have been described as second-order elections for over 40 years (e.g., Hix and Marsh, 2007, 2011; Marsh, 1998; Reif and Schmitt, 1980) because 'not evaluations of the EU's performance per se but typically ... voters' judgments about national political issues' (Rohrschneider and Clark, 2008: 138) form the basis of the voting decision.

This last point is connected to the observation that European politics are simply too distant and perceived as too different from national politics: Therefore, 'citizens cannot understand the EU, and so will never be able to assess and regard it as a democratic system writ large, nor to identify with it' (Follesdal and Hix, 2006: 536; also Kielmansegg, 2003). In this respect, Barker points out that the 'alleged [democratic] deficit is an absence of something which is desired, but has never yet existed' (Barker, 2003: 160) and that it is not so much a deficiency

of European democracy but that there is simply no *European* demos comparable to the national *demos* of the EU's nation states (also Kielmansegg, 2003; Scharpf, 1999).

Mirroring this insight, the academic discussion has turned to increasingly discuss the role of national parliaments in EU affairs as representatives of national *demos* and alternative sources of legitimacy (e.g., Auel et al., 2016; Heffttler et al., 2015). While their possibilities to control EU legislation differ immensely from one parliament to the other (e.g., Auel et al., 2015b; Bormann and Winzen, 2016; Winzen, 2012), it is especially the communication function of national parliaments in EU affairs that has been discussed as a way to bring European topics home to the domestic constituency and make the complex processes by which EU policies come about more transparent to those affected by them (e.g., Auel, 2007; Rauh, 2014): National parliaments 'have become the most important and visible arena for public political debate about the state and future of European integration ... [since the increased politicisation of EU politics has led] ... to a more active engagement of national parliaments in the debate on question of European integration' (Wendler, 2016: 1). This seems an intuitive result regarding the fact that national parliaments had to give their consent to highly contentious issues such as bailout packages or austerity measures. At the same time, however, national parliaments in the EU are not only a passive subject of an academic discussion. They seem to have become more conscious about the legitimising role they play as representatives of national *demos* and increasingly claim their seat at the table of relevant political actors in the EU.

Starting from these basic observations, we shall in the following take a closer look at the core concepts that the discussion revolving around the democratic deficit touches upon to embed our research in a greater normative context. In particular, we discuss the concepts of representative democracy, legitimacy, and legitimation as a communicative act in particular.

2.1.1 Legitimacy

Generally speaking, democracy is held in high regard due to the fact that 'citizens of well-functioning democracies enjoy greater freedom, wealth, and human development ... and they experience less violence, deprivation, and domination' (Warren, 2006: 383). The

organisation of political rule in terms of democracy, thus, is a successful one. Following the famous words of Abraham Lincoln, democracy essentially means collective self-government: of the people, by the people, and for the people (De Wilde, 2009: 63; also Follesdal, 2004: 9; Mezey, 2008). It embodies a principle of equality of all citizens in all civic freedoms and rights embedded in the legal structure of democracies (e.g., Lord and Tamvaki, 2013: 28-30); and this equality entails not only moral and legal equality but also the presupposition that citizens are equally capable of self-determination (Urbinati and Warren, 2008: 395; also Warren, 2006: 385). To realise democratic principles, institutions are installed that are designed to vouch for compliance and the respect of equality. Accordingly, democratic values manifest themselves in 'any set of arrangements that instantiates the principle that all affected by collective decisions should have an opportunity to influence the outcome' (Urbinati and Warren, 2008: 395).

The idea, thus, is that democratic procedures are a manifestation of how a society has agreed to govern itself – i.e., how power is distributed in order to realise the promotion of welfare of a given society while respecting the democratic ideal (also Olsen, 2016). Power essentially means the ability of an individual or group to achieve their own goals or aims when others are trying to prevent them from realising them (Weber, [1921] 1980: 28); power may constrain the freedom of those subordinate to it, it may even reduce their life quality or endanger their lives, while those that hold power often strive to enhance the scope of it and in doing this, may get in each other's way.

It is for this reason that power needs to be 'subject ... to justifiable rules, and the powerful themselves will seek to secure consent to their power from at least the most important among their subordinates. [In sum, where] ... power is acquired and exercised according to justifiable rules, and with evidence of consent, we call it rightful or legitimate' (Beetham, 1991: 3; also Glaser, 2013; Habermas, 1973). Following from the democratic principle of equality, then, this evidence of consent should ideally be given by all citizens affected and procedures must allow citizens to participate in democratic politics to effectively express their consent. In addition, power should be separated in a way that does not allow for it to

remain unchecked or with the possibility of growing to an uncontrollable extent (e.g., Montesquieu, 1748; Vile, 1967).

However, legitimacy is a 'metaphor, not a real phenomenon out there' (Barker, 2003: 160). What is justifiable or not relates to normative standards and values which may well differ from one society to the other: 'We cannot anticipate, say, what principles of distributional justice people would agree to in an original position, outside all power relations and in ignorance of their future position within them' (Beetham, 1991: 247). Legitimacy is, therefore, inevitably relative, contestable, and subject to personal opinions and standards. Due to this contingency, the notion of legitimacy is not easily captured, despite – or maybe because of – its centrality 'to virtually all of political science ... [After all,] it pertains to how power may be used in ways that citizens consciously accept' (Gilley, 2006: 499). In fact, the most striking characteristic of the legitimacy discussion seems to be its 'creative disagreement' (Lord and Magnette, 2004).

To start with, a standard reference for any discussion of legitimacy in the social sciences is Weber for whom legitimacy essentially is the 'belief in legitimacy' (Weber, [1921] 1980). However, this definition has given rise to broad criticism because it seems to 'divorce people's beliefs about legitimacy from their *grounds or reasons* for holding them' (Beetham, 1991: 10; emphasis in original). Thus, it does not provide for any reason why people should believe that a regime was legitimate or not. In consequence, Weber seems to dispute the claim that rational objective standards to evaluate the legitimacy of a political regime could even exist (Pitkin, 1972: 283). While arguing that Weber's definition has been reduced and thereby misinterpreted, Beetham further qualifies the definition by stating that '[a] given power relationship is not legitimate because people believe in its legitimacy, but because it can be *justified* in terms of their beliefs' (Beetham, 1991: 9; emphasis in original). Justifiability, then, would require common standards of legitimacy or a public agreement about them – in sum a 'plausible *public political theory*' (Follesdal, 2004: 17; emphasis in original).

While the legitimacy discussion mostly revolves around the subjects of power, some scholars focus on the self-legitimation strategies of decision-makers and emphasize the active part that the regime, 'that is the political order as a whole' (Follesdal, 2004: 13), plays in legitimating itself and in reproducing existing power hierarchies. In this respect, Lipset defines it as its ability to 'engender and maintain the belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate ones for society' (Lipset, 1963: 86; also Barker, 2001).

In a more systemic fashion, one of the most pervasive definitions of legitimacy developed in the EU context comes from Scharpf (1999) who introduces the distinction between democratic input legitimacy focusing on governance 'by the people' and output legitimacy stressing governance 'for the people'. The former is built on a notion of community in the sense that political decisions can be derived from authentic preferences of members of a community expressed in the procedures that guide the decision-making process. The latter emphasises the promotion of the welfare of a given community by political decisions as the outcome of procedures.

While we only highlight important cornerstones, the literature on legitimacy as a concept is extant (see, e.g., Barker, 2001: 7-12; Booth and Seligson, 2009: 6-24). In sum, however, different scholars apply different taxonomies and start from different angles regarding their conceptualisation of legitimacy. They all agree on that it is the exercise of power that has to be legitimated by those exercising it, and before those affected by it. Legitimacy relates to the characteristics of political decisions that would make them acceptable or actually accepted by the ones affected (Barker, 2001, 2003; Beetham, 1991; Beetham and Lord, 1998; Follesdal, 2004; Lord and Magnette, 2004; Scharpf, 1999; Weber, [1921] 1980). Overall, we can analytically distinguish the normative and the empirical dimension of legitimacy (Schmidtke and Schneider, 2012: 225). Normative discussions concern the way a regime *should* work, and relate to the foundations of a society concerning basic norms and values, such as the equality of all citizens, the freedom of opinion, or the right to physical integrity for example. Normative definitions of legitimacy imply the *worthiness of a regime*

to be accepted against yardsticks that express the idea of how power should be legitimately distributed (e.g., Habermas, 1962, 1973, 2012).

The empirical dimension, then, focusses on the actual act of legitimation by those in power (e.g., Barker, 2001) and how legitimacy is evaluated by the subordinated. It looks at the *actual acceptance* of political rule by those who are affected by it – namely the subjects or the people (Schmitt and Thomassen, 2007: 9). Following from the principle of equality of all citizens in a democracy, they should ideally all find the distribution of power and the way it is exercised worthy of being accepted. Why would they otherwise accept undesired duties, such as paying taxes for example (Habermas, 1996; Rawls, 1993)? In practice, therefore, legitimacy is an indispensable resource to ensure compliance (Scharpf, 2007) and overall, it is posited in the literature that, while it is unclear to what degree, legitimacy furthers the stability of a political system (e.g., Booth and Seligson, 2009).

Coming back to the EU's democratic deficit, the Treaty of the EU as its legal foundation clarifies that 'the Union shall observe the principle of the equality of its citizens', its functioning 'shall be founded on representative democracy' and '[d]ecisions shall be taken as openly and as closely as possible to the citizen' (Treaty of the European Union: Title II). Thus, democratic principles are incorporated in the very legal basis of the EU polity expressing agreement between member states on this matter. The democratic deficit, then, does not seem to relate to the fact that democratic principles are not acknowledged, but to the perceived lack of legitimacy of how democracy is organised in terms of the functioning of the EU. To grasp the gist of the discussion about the democratic deficit, we, therefore, look into the concept of democratic representation to understand how democracy does or does not function in the EU.

2.1.2 Representation

It's hard to imagine today's liberal mass democracies without representation (Pollak et al., 2009: 1) since '[r]epresentation is crucial in constituting democratic practices' (Plotke, 1997: 19). Historically, however, representation and democracy are not as intertwined as this might suggest (Urbinati and Warren, 2008). Representation as an organisational idea

was originally promoted as a means to prevent democracy in the form of direct rule of the mob, installing non-elected representatives as self-proclaimed advocates of people's interests (Manin, 1997; Urbinati, 2006). In the 20th century, however, representation was a way to adapt the democratic ideal to the reality of mass democracies since 'our *agorae* [had] ... become too small to accommodate all the citizens entitled to make decisions' (Pollak et al., 2009: 3; Urbinati and Warren, 2008: 389). Today's representative democracies are institutionally anchored in parliaments as the central arenas of freely elected representatives' competition over political alternatives – as a 'Congress of Opinions' (Mill [1861] 1998). And while parliaments are increasingly questioned because their constituencies are territorially defined and territorial borders have become more and more permeated in today's globalised societies, they are still regarded the ultimate reference when it comes to the legitimacy of state power (Urbinati and Warren, 2008; Pollak, 2007).

The idea of selecting a group of people to tend to state affairs on behalf of it implies the transferral of authority from all to some. The power of democratic decision-makers originates in the authority of the people which seems to bear a notion of divinity, much like the divine rule of kings. In a more rational vein, this belief in a 'mysterious authority' of the people can be seen as a 'legitimizing myth' (Canovan, 2006: 357) on which modern democracies are built. The delegation of this authority, then, needs to live up to this myth. Representatives are, therefore, elected for a certain term in free, equal, and secret elections which means that they have to win citizens' votes again when their term comes to an end. Elections allow citizens to regularly express their consent or discontent with political decision-makers and, as a result, vest a freshly mixed representative assembly with the authority to govern. In sum, elections 'are the key moments when electorates hold representatives accountable, when new power holders are granted legitimacy, and, ideally – following open and engaged campaigns – when large contingents of informed citizens take part' (Van der Brug and De Vreese, 2016b: 1). Beside other means to participate in politics, e.g., protesting in the streets, election frequencies constitute the heartbeat of representative democracy.

Equal citizens who are capable of deciding who should govern them have to be informed to grasp the consequences of their choices which is why the transparency of political action is of central importance. Morally and legally equal citizens must have access to information about all aspects of government in order to be equally autonomous, self-determined citizens that *can* exert authority as a people: so they understand the contents and effects of policies and how the political order affects their lives, so they are enabled to judge the trustworthiness of political decision-makers and can form an opinion on whom to cast their ballot for. In sum, in accordance with the principle of equality, the right to information is regarded a universal human right which is anchored in Article 11 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU since '[t]ransparency and access to information determine who has the right to know who the decision-makers are, what procedures they employ, what their areas of interest are, and what the consequences of their decisions are' (Héritier, 2003: 819).

Summing up, representative democracy must be built on 'a set of institutions in which the idea of the original or hypothetical contract between equals is as nearly as possible approached in practice, by making all rules of power open to discussion, criticism and revision by the decision of equal citizens' (Beetham, 1991: 247).

The relationship between representatives and constituencies and its implications are well captured in the principal-agent concept whereby the people act as a principal transferring authority to their agents – their representatives – because the pursuit of some goals, otherwise, would be too costly (e.g., Behnke, 2008; Pollack, 1997; Strom, 1997). To avoid opportunistic behaviour of the representative that, due to her more direct involvement in decision-making, may profit from an asymmetric distribution of information, the principal needs to control and limit the agent to ensure that decisions are taken in her interest: 'The challenge is to find ways of ensuring perfect compliance, so that agents cannot exploit the costs of measuring their characteristics and performance to act contrary to the preferences of the principal' (Kassim and Menon, 2003: 122).

In order to enable citizens to measure and evaluate performances, representatives need to transparently account for their decisions and behaviour: 'In situations where a few make binding decisions on behalf of a community, democratic norms prescribe that they shall be accountable to the citizens' (Olsen, 2016: 1). Accountability, consequently, pertains to the representatives' 'duty to explain and justify their reasons' (Auel, 2007: 495; also Olsen, 2016) before their electorate (also Manin, 1997). While constituents may not see all their interests fulfilled, they all have the same right to receive an explanation for why a decision was made (e.g., Forst, 2007). This is especially crucial under conditions of majority rule: Political processes have to be justified so that the outnumbered parts of the electorate '... feel satisfied that their opinion has been heard and set aside [...] for what are thought to be better reasons' (Mill, [1861] 1998: 282). In turn, for the electorate to accept political output, it has to mirror their interests and, therefore, political decision-makers, since they act on behalf of citizens, have to be responsive to their needs (Pollak et al., 2009: 16-18). In that respect, political theorists have discussed the degree of discretion that representatives may have in the exercise of their office (e.g., Rehfeld, 2009; Urbinati and Warren, 2008).

In a nutshell, we understand democracy as 'a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by the citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives' (Schmitter and Karl, 1996, see also Hurrelmann et al., 2009, 2012; also Follesdal, 2004: 9 for a very similar definition). In addition, we perceive representation as a communicative act based on the conventional definition of Pitkin (1967) who defined it as 'substantive acting for others'. Focussing on communication, we do not concentrate on what representation is but on what it does and in doing this, focus on 'the effects of its invocation rather than its institutional embodiment' (Saward, 2010: 4; more generally also Dryzek and Niemeyer, 2008; Habermas, 1962). In that respect, transparency means that information is public and visibility is not restricted. It constitutes one fundamental precondition of legitimacy, namely that procedures and outputs of political rule are accessible enough for equal citizens to get information about and to understand it. The communication of information

about politics to the public, thus, is essentially what establishes transparency and publicity, shows the responsiveness of political elites, and lays the basis for accountability.

Communication, for our purposes, is broadly perceived as an exchange of information (e.g., McQuail and Windahl, 2015: 4-6) according to the Lasswell-Formula: 'who says what in which channel to whom with what effect?' (Lasswell, 1948). It is understood as the process of acquiring, maintaining, or withdrawing legitimacy, as legitimation. This includes political actors as senders that communicate for acquiring or maintaining the legitimacy of their own behaviour, their political decisions and the political system as such. Such communication needs to signal trustworthiness in the sense that the interests of citizens are represented – thus, that political decision-makers are actually responsive to the public and comply with the rules that constitute the political regime. It also includes citizens that, influenced by this information, express their opinions in elections or other channels of participation.

It is not only transparency that needs to be achieved but '[p]ublicity, ... which is only attained if – additionally [to transparency, O.E.] – the citizenry is actually aware of these same objectives' (Hüller, 2007: 563; also Habermas, 2012; Lord and Tamvaki, 2013: 29). In that respect, the process of representation in mass democracies could not function without means that connect political elites with citizens: This function of building a communication bridge between governors and governed is fulfilled by the mass media (e.g., Michailidou and Trenz 2012: 135; also Habermas, 1962; Hurrelmann, 2014; Shoemaker, 2006). The media diffuse information and thereby provide the information needed for the maintenance, or, in contrast, the withdrawal of legitimacy of the political regime by the ultimate consent-givers, the citizens. In doing this, media mirror public opinion and thus, communicate the public interest to decision-makers. Overall, just as liberal mass democracies cannot be imagined without representation, representation cannot be imagined without the supportive arrangements constituted by the mass media.

2.1.3 Mass Communication

Generally speaking, daily public political communication in mass democracies is difficult to organize in a direct, inter-subjective manner (Örnebring and Jönsson, 2004: 284, citing Thompson, 1995). It follows that political actors need the mass media as an institutionalised channel to diffuse their messages to the wider public and that the mass media are the main source of political information for citizens. Mass media present a platform for public reflexion about what democracy means, how it should work, how it works in reality, and if the way democracy works is deemed legitimate: 'Assisted by public media, citizens and authorities must be able to determine whether the institutions and decisions roughly match ... normative requirements' (Follesdal, 2004: 17). The media, therefore, play a fundamental role in communicating political information as a prerequisite for an informed citizenship that is able to take part in day-to-day democracy (Dewey, 1927; Fraser, 1990; Habermas, 1962, 2006). In this respect, the 'presence of pluralism and independence of the media are essential to democratic rule' (Carlsson, 2016: 19) like the pluralism of opinions and the competition between representatives is essential to democratic rule (Schmitter and Karl, 1996). Overall, thus, we look at mass communication which is characterised as follows.

"Mass communications comprise the institutions and techniques by which specialized groups employ technological devices (press, radio, films, etc.) to disseminate symbolic content to large, heterogeneous and widely dispersed audiences" (Janowitz 1968). ... Of particular significance in mass communication are: the public and open nature of all communication; the limited and controlled access to 'sending' facilities, the impersonality of the relationship between sender and receiver; the intervention of institutionalized arrangements between sender and receiver' (McQuail and Windahl, 2015: 6).

Media contents as such can be perceived as a container of legitimization discourses. They provide the technical means to transmit contents about all sorts of political topics: political actors and interaction, policies or the polity. Hence, they constitute the 'main communicative space' (Kleinen-von Königslöw, 2012: 445) in a public sphere, defined as 'a constellation of communicative spaces in society that permit the circulation of information, ideas, debates' (Dahlgren, 2005: 148). In sum, this public sphere is a societal forum for political debate and contestation (Wessler et al., 2008: chapter 1) in which a common discussion and evaluation of politics may take place and common opinions on how politics

should be judged may be formed (Dewey, 1927; Fossum and Schlesinger, 2007; Fraser, 1990; Habermas, 1962, 2006).

As Beetham contends, 'it is reflection on the empirical processes through which legitimacy is reproduced, that leads to the discovery of the principles and procedures of an ideal legitimacy which is not conditioned by the very power that it validates' (Beetham, 1991: 246 based on Rousseau, 1963; also Barker, 2003; Schmidtke and Schneider, 2012). The public sphere in which this reflection takes place is a distinct space separated from the state, the economy or the family. Public spheres are 'capable of influencing the use of public power and of holding public officials accountable' (Fraser, 2009: 155; also Manin, 1997): In the Habermasian sense, in the public sphere, 'individuals and groups criticize the state, discuss society, and debate issues of common concern ... in a rational-critical debate' (Butler Breese, 2011: 131). This 'bourgeois' public sphere is regarded as the dominant one and superior to the so called 'counterpublics'; in adopting this concept, we recognise the fact that power dissimilarities exist between 'multiple but unequal public spheres' (Fraser, 1990: 128) competing for legitimacy.

Regarding European politics, media play an even more important role given the 'remoteness' of the EU which is not perceived as part of citizens' daily life of and is, therefore, an experience they usually make indirectly through the media (De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2016: 238; Schmidtke and Schneider, 2012: 236/237; also De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006c). In this respect, the democratic deficit of the EU has also been studied in terms of a communication deficit (Anderson and McLeod, 2004; Meyer, 1999):

'EU communication is perceived as inadequate, suffering from a fragmented institutional set-up with blurred political authority, the technocratic mentality of EU bureaucrats, and a lack of professional communications staff ... [Furthermore, it] is assumed that the way in which EU politics is communicated (or rather not communicated) is reflective of the complex and non-transparent decision-making process between EU institutions' (Boomgaarden, 2016: 216).

As a result, the nature of EU politics remains complex and inscrutable: '[P]ublic communication in Europe lacks the basic understanding and agreement that distinguishes a political community and marks its competence for democracy' (Trenz, 2004: 292).

Concluding, Habermas pinpoints the crucial importance of the mass media for EU politics in stating that ‘the more the national populations realize, and *the media help them to realize*, how profoundly the decisions of the European Union pervade their daily lives, the more their interest in making use of their democratic rights also as EU citizens will increase’ (Habermas, 2012: 49, emphasis in the original).

Overall, the underlying definition of political communication that we will use here includes the aims of communication, i.e. the acquisition, maintenance or withdrawal of legitimacy, as the broad goal of political communication in democracies. Accordingly, it is defined as

‘purposeful communication about politics. This incorporates: (1) All forms of communication undertaken by politicians and other political actors for the purpose of achieving specific objectives; (2) Communication addressed to these actors by non-politicians such as voters and newspaper columnists; (3) Communication about these actors and their activities, as contained in news reports, editorials, and other forms of media discussion of politics’ (McNair, 2011: 4).

Drawing these considerations together, we look at public communication in the dominant public sphere occupied with political discussion and facilitated by the mass media. Scholars have assessed the importance of interpersonal communication for the formation of opinions about politics as well and highlighted its importance for political discourse and attitudes towards the EU (e.g., Boomgaarden, 2016). However, ‘(p)ublic communication is a link between governing and governed’ (Schmidtke and Schneider, 2012: 238) which is, given the focus on EP legitimation, ultimately what we are interested in. We, therefore, focus on the dominant public discourse based also on the assumption that this public sphere is the most influential regarding political communication in which ever sphere of communication.

Having reflected on the normative background of the thesis, the goal of our next chapter is to explore the empirical discussion concerning the EU’s communication deficit. In the last section of this chapter 2, then, identified research gaps are sketched and addressed by formulating research questions to guide our analyses.

2.2 The Greater Empirical Context: Parliamentary EU Communication and Its Effects

In the following, we look at the literature on parliamentary communication and its effects to understand the empirical context in which the thesis is situated. Mirroring our interest in the EP's legitimization, we start with the EP as the active legitimator and zoom in on communication by parliaments. The following chapter, then, looks at how media or newspapers have reacted to the EP as a news item. Lastly, we discuss findings regarding the effects of media contents about the EP. In all discussions we also consider the EU and parliaments to provide a more complete picture of the insights on which we draw in this thesis – and also to compensate the scarcity of research on communication by and about the EP and its effects.

2.2.1 Communication of European Affairs by Parliaments

This chapter discusses the broader question of *why and how MEPs pursue legitimacy*. As discussed earlier, we perceive the pursuit of legitimization essentially as communication. Communication by parliaments can be studied looking at various aspects. On the one hand, studies look at how well parliamentary or political actors have adapted to the media logic and what strategies they employ; on the other hand, research assesses how parliaments communicate with their citizens, and how political contestation within parliament contributes to making EU politics more transparent (e.g., Auel and Raunio, 2014a; Leston-Bandeira and Bender, 2013; Negrine, 1999; Shahin and Neuhold, 2007; Marschall, 2001, 2009; Pollak and Slominski, 2014).

Overall, the communication of parliaments as institutions with their citizens has gained some attention (Norton, 1997a and 1997b, 2002; Leston-Bandeira, 2007, 2012). The general finding is that parliaments differ to a considerable extent in their communicative efforts and their accessibility for citizens due to their different traditions and institutional structures. This probably explains the lack of comparative studies and an overall theoretical framework. Another finding is that there are considerable differences between parliaments as institutions and the constituency work of individual MPs or party groups (Costa et al., 2012; Norton, 2002). While parliaments in France and the UK, for example do not enjoy a lot of appreciation in the public, individual MPs are held in high regard leading to a rather

individualized link between representatives and their constituency. Furthermore, the communicative efforts of some parliamentary institutions (like the German Bundestag) seem to have increased which, however, has not helped to foster public trust (Ilonszki and Papp, 2012; Saalfeld and Dobmeier, 2012).

Regarding EU communication as such, Schüttemeyer and Siefken (2008) provide some insights as to how national parliaments see themselves in EU matters, namely mainly as monitoring or controlling organs, and not as communicators in the first place. Investigating the Austrian Parliament's communication of EU affairs to the public, Pollak and Slominski (2012, 2014) analyse press releases, parliamentary website contents, data on events and visitor services, and conduct interviews with MPs and civil servants. Results suggest that EU communication is not a top priority on the communication agenda of the institution or MPs while party groups only engage actively when they have to. Perhaps unaware of their own possibilities to change this situation, interviewees complained about the 'modest efforts to make Europe understood and the lack of any coherent communication structures' (Pollak and Slominski, 2012: 189).

As part of the process of political contestation in legislation, parliamentary questions are studied (e.g., Green-Pedersen, 2012; Martin, 2011). Main results here point at the fact that the composition of the constituency plays a role in terms of the issues of questions; for example, questions concerning minorities are asked more often when the share of minorities in the constituency is higher (Saalfeld, 2011). Moreover, party affiliation and the region (Russo, 2011) are suggested to be important explanations; in addition, a positive influence of party cohesion on the number of questions (Dandoy, 2011) is found. Focussing on the EU explicitly, Navarro and Brouard (2012) find no significant differences between the EU and other issues of parliamentary questions – surprisingly not even for Eurosceptic or opposition MPs (Navarro and Brouard, 2012: 211). Another interesting result is the influence of the type of parliament on communication: The UK House of Commons as the classic debating parliament, for example, seems to use public scrutiny as a means to compensate

for its weak institutional control rights in security policies (Rozenberg et al., 2011: 350; also Auel, 2008 and Sprungk, 2010 for similar arguments concerning EU matters in particular).

With regard to questioning in the EP, research is rather scarce and, therefore, limited in scope. Raunio's (1996) results suggest that written questions are a popular tool for MEPs since regulations for oral questions are stricter and subject to discretion of the president. Roederer-Rynning (2003), looking at the involvement of the EP in the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), finds that the range of committees engaging in parliamentary questioning became broader over time. This suggests that the competition of interests has grown more plural within this particular policy field and a change of its agenda more generally (Roederer-Rynning, 2003: 125/126). Rozenberg and Martin (2011) suggest that MEPs use written rather than oral questions and that the EP as an active policy-influencer spends comparably less time on questioning the executive than other parliaments (Rozenberg and Martin, 2011: 400/401).

Jensen et al. (2013) look at the influence of the national government-opposition divide on parliamentary questioning in the EP. They find that opposition party MEPs use parliamentary questions to alert the Commission to problems with EU implementation at home. Ringing that 'fire alarm' can then lead to the Commission taking action against the particular member state, potentially resulting in public shaming of the government. Thus, the EP also presents an arena for effective scrutiny of the national government by its national opposition (Jensen et al., 2013: 276). In his recent contribution, Sozzi (2016) looks at the influence of the domestic electoral system on the questioning behaviour of MEPs. His conclusions suggest that MEPs coming from candidate-centred systems have more incentives to pose questions.

Furthermore, debates are a popular topic for the study of parliamentary. Bergman et al. (2003: 175) diagnose that the EU as a topic is rather absent on domestic parliamentary plenary agendas (e.g., Auel and Raunio, 2014a; De Ruiter, 2014; Garcia Lupato, 2012) and only finds its way onto the floor of the house with salient EU events or developments such as treaty reforms (Maatsch, 2010), European Council summits (Van de Steeg, 2010) or

politicised dossiers like the Service Directive (Miklin, 2014). Overall, the tenor used to be that ‘there is not a real debate on European issues in general parliamentary debates’ (Garcia Lupato, 2012: 106). This picture, however, changed significantly over time (Rauh, 2014). The visibility of, and also the contestation over Europe in national plenaries has increased immensely especially due to the politicizing spark of the financial crisis (Auel and Höing, 2015; Auel and Raunio, 2014a; Auel et al., 2016; Closa and Maatsch, 2014; Puntscher Riekmann and Wydra, 2013; Raunio, 2016b; Wendler, 2014, 2016).

Studies on debates in the EP are, again, quite low in number. Lord and Tamvaki (2013) measure the quality of discourse in EP debates along five indicators of an enhanced Discourse Quality Index (see also Lord, 2013). Their results suggest that, compared to other studies on national parliaments, the EP seems to have a higher discourse quality overall. MEPs include interests as well as values and rights in their justifications of their stances and refer to their national and European constituencies. The authors also find a consensual national political culture to exert a positive influence on the efforts MEPs undertake to justify their opinions.

In a more quantitative vein, Proksch and Slapin (2011) look at conflict lines in EP debates assessing the position-taking of MEPs in their speeches on the floor of the house. Their findings suggest that partisan and national divisions are more prominent in speech acts than general left-right divisions. This stands in contrast to studies on voting behaviour in which ideological cleavages prevail (e.g., Hix and Noury, 2009). In another study, Slapin and Proksch (2010) analyse the use of parliamentary speeches as MEPs’ tools to communicate with their national and European party. They find that especially with the occurrence of conflicts between the national party and the EP party group, speeches are used to explain the national position to the other members of the party group and at the same time provide the MEP with an opportunity to serve her party and improve her record with regard to being re-selected for elections.

In sum, it has become evident in the research discussed in this chapter that the national level plays an important role in the study of the EP and its communication activities in

particular. MEPs represent national constituencies and are organised in European party groups; concerning politics as such, conflicts originating at the national level may find their way to the European stage using indirect ways to publicly shame the government. Overall, the two levels are perceived as inseparably intertwined. On a larger scale, this seems to be mirrored in the increased discussion of national parliaments' role in EU affairs against the background of the democratic deficit and the fact that the EP alone has not succeeded in fostering citizens' support of the EU. Given that they represent the different *demos* united in the European Union and both levels are discussed as possible sources of legitimacy to foster public acceptance of EU policies, it would be important to understand how they themselves project this interparliamentary relationship to the public and what position they envisage for themselves or the other level in the EU's multitier representative system.

However, while the literature of communication activities by the EP is already rather scarce, to date, analyses explicitly addressing parliaments' communication about this multilevel relationship in terms of co-operation or competition do not seem to exist. One could, for example, look at the stances NPs take regarding an empowerment of the EP (see Winzen et al., 2014 for that type of analysis from an institutionalist angle) or vice versa. Occasions when common communications (e.g., press releases) could occur would be, for example, mutual visits or joint statements which, admittedly, seem to be comparably rare events. An interesting development in this respect is the introduction of speaking time for MEPs in some national plenaries, which has, probably due to its novelty, not been studied so far (but see Valentin 2016 for an exception still rather limited in scope). Thus, it may be due to the scarcity of analysable data that academia has to date not addressed this issue more elaborately.

2.2.2 Media Communication about the EU and Parliaments

In this chapter, we discuss the question of *why and how journalists (do not) cover the work of MEPs*. In doing this, we look at the academic discussion about media coverage about the EP to identify the open questions that the thesis will address. Generally, parliaments do not seem to be in a good position competing for media attention with other political actors (Marschall, 2009; Negrine, 1999). The EP is rarely assessed explicitly and, while the EU has

become more visible in the news, EU affairs do not seem to feature very prominently (Baisnée, 2003; Boomgaarden and De Vreese, 2016).

The decreasing prominence of parliaments in the media can be reconnected to the dominance of executives and parliaments' loss of power over decisions that are increasingly taken beyond national borders (De Wilde, 2014; Koopmans and Statham, 2010). Additionally, parliaments' work is often perceived as too predictable on the one hand and too complex and cumbersome on the other hand to meet the readership's taste (Koopmans and Statham, 2010; Negrine, 1999; also Van Aelst et al., 2015). Marschall (2001) points at the possible distortion of parliamentary work in the media: The fact that it is reduced to the visible parts of its work eventually contributes to marginalising parliaments on the news agenda so that their visibility in the news would not seem to mirror their importance in the legislative process (Marschall, 2005: 184; also Negrine, 1999; Marcinkowski, 2000; Marschall, 2009). Nonetheless, parliaments' relevance for the media is corroborated by the fact that they make legally binding decisions directly relevant for people and important for national politics; they, therefore, possess an 'inherent news value' (Tresch, 2009; also Mayntz, 2002).

Studies on parliamentary coverage mostly deal with national parliaments in general – and not in EU affairs. They tend to focus on their visibility, very often in election times with a focus on campaigning (e.g., Lengauer and Winder, 2013; Midtbo, 2011; Semetko and Schönbach, 2003; Tresch, 2009). A larger strand of research takes on explaining the visibility of individual parliamentarians listing their political and media work and their individual and functional attributes (age, gender, attractiveness, incumbency, party, centrality in the political spectrum, seniority and political standing) as main explanatory factors (see Vos, 2014 for an extensive overview). Focussing on parliamentary activities, oral questions seem to attract the media's attention if the addressees do not know their contents beforehand (Salmond, 2014; see also Rozenberg et al., 2011; Van Santen et al., 2015). Written questions, in contrast, seem to have a more indirect effect and serve as a sort of attention raiser for

specific issues that may then be taken up by the media, rather than written questions being a subject of reporting themselves (Green-Pedersen, 2012: 350).

Turning to the EU, many studies investigate news contents about it in general. Very often they are based on data covering the periods around EP elections but without laying a special emphasis on the parliament itself (e.g., Boomgaarden et al., 2013; De Vreese et al., 2006; Maier et al., 2011; Schuck et al., 2011, 2013). Reconnecting to what we discussed earlier, the media give most attention to power: They favour executive actors and make Brussels as much visible as it is powerful (Koopmans and Statham, 2010: 77). Studies on EU coverage typically stress the low visibility in the media due to the large amount of information that would be needed to contextualise EU politics since the integration process is perceived as too complex and abstract (De Vreese et al., 2006; Hewstone, 1986). This, however, stresses the importance of the media often being the only source of information for the opinion-building process concerning EU matters (De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006a: 421).

Overall it is found that the EU's news visibility increased over time (Boomgaarden and De Vreese, 2016; Boomgaarden et al., 2013). Special events like elections, council summits, but also EP plenary sessions are identified as overarching, genuine EU-related factors increasing coverage; also national events and specific policies influence the amount of reporting (Boomgaarden et al., 2010; also Van der Brug and De Vreese, 2016a; De Vreese, 2001; also Peter and De Vreese, 2004). However, studies also suggest that election coverage mostly features national political actors and not EU actors (De Vreese et al., 2006). In this respect, the usual finding is that there is no overarching European public sphere but an Europeanisation of national public spheres: Public discourse about the EU, thus, follows national borders (Kaiser and Kleinen-von Königslöw, 2016; Kleinen-von Königslöw, 2012; Koopmans and Erbe, 2004; Risse, 2010). In addition, framing of EU news is found to depend on the electoral system, public opinion about the EU and the medium in question; new member states' media tend to dedicate more attention to EU news with more balanced evaluations. In contrast, in old member states, the EU is covered less and more negatively (Schuck et al., 2013).

Only a few studies have investigated public communication about the EP explicitly. Here, a first contribution comes from Sonntag (1983) who compares France, Italy, the UK and West Germany, taking different media outlets into account (radio, TV and press). He defines the salience of events reported as main influencing factor for the EP to appear in the media. An exploratory study of Morgan (1999) investigates media coverage of the EP in the UK and compares it with other studies on Ireland and Belgium. He finds that historical developments, the electoral systems, public support for EU membership and the political position of the respective country in the EU are the most important explanatory variables. Baisnée (2003) takes a closer look at correspondents' relations with the EP in Brussels. His results suggest that the journalistic culture of the countries of origin is partially an explanation for the rather low coverage of the EP. Overall, he concludes that EU topics are just 'not interesting enough'; journalists usually do not know much about it and in not covering the EU, create a sort of vicious circle because they do not make a contribution to educating people (or themselves).

More recently, Gattermann (2011, 2013) assesses 'the amount, volume and content of news referring to EU parliamentary affairs as well as the approaches of their producers' (Gattermann, 2011: 12). Comparing broadsheet coverage in six countries (Ireland, UK, France, the Netherlands, Germany and Austria), she finds that the EP is covered regularly, and public support for the EU has a positive impact on the amount of coverage while higher trust of the national legislature and a high level of party contestation over Europe result in lower EP coverage. She also finds that journalists take the national parliamentary culture as a standard and proxy to explain the EP to their audience. In addition, Gattermann and Vasilopoulou (2015) focus on the visibility of MEPs in national broadsheets in five EU countries. Based on a sample of 302 MEPs from 2009 to 2011, their results suggest that 'political office, length of tenure and domestic party leadership have a positive effect' (Gattermann and Vasilopoulou, 2015: 1; see also Vos, 2014) while being active in legislative affairs has mixed and actual attendance in the plenary even negative effects.

The recent study by Auel et al. (2015a) focusses on national parliaments in EU affairs. Their results indicate that there is a positive effect of parliamentary activities on the extent of the coverage they receive. Other explanatory factors are the potential for conflict within a coalition, public opinion about the EU and the salience of EU topics (Auel et al., 2015a: 20/21). Studies about how both parliamentary levels become visible in the news or how they are evaluated comparatively seem to be extremely scarce. One exception is the work by Gattermann (2011) who finds that MEPs are usually evaluated more negatively in comparison to their national colleagues.

Overall, the visibility of parliaments as such decreased over time while they still possess an inherent news value due to the binding decisions they take. The EU, in contrast, became more visible in public, especially due to an increased politicisation during the crisis. Results on the influence of parliamentary activities on coverage are somewhat inconclusive but point at a positive influence. Regarding interparliamentary relationships, it seems that the visibility of both parliamentary levels together has been mostly neglected so far. Information about it, however, seems important in a confusing multiplayer field in which citizens' interests are represented by different channels that work together or against each other and can influence very different things at different points in EU legislation.

2.2.3 Media Effects on Public Support of the EU and Parliaments

In this section, the guiding question is *why and how citizens (do not) react to media contents about the EP*. The media as the main source and facilitators of public communication have continuously been found to be a crucial influence of public opinion (Hobolt and De Vries, 2016). The strength of such influences is often debated and the discussion found it to be limited, great, and again minimal (Blumler, 2015; Bennett and Iyengar, 2008). As Blumler (2015: 427) observes, '[s]uch argumentation about the overall strength of impact no longer makes much sense ... when multiple message sources are now so diverse and fragmented'. In addition, to empirically measure media effects or disentangle them from other influences which, in turn, may be influenced by media contents, has proven rather challenging. Furthermore, there are also methodological conditions leading to findings of only minimal effects in media effects analyses (Scharkow and Bachl, 2016).

Notwithstanding these conclusions, the agreement is that media contents have effects on citizens' opinions about politics (e.g., Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2016; see also Blumler, 2015; Norris 1999, 2000). Regarding media effects of EU related contents, the overall finding is that they have significant, but moderate effects (Hobolt and De Vries, 2016: 22.10). Yet, given that the EU is a perceived distant, complex and not very visible topic, the media usually are the only source of information and, therefore, it is important to understand how they influence public opinion and support nonetheless (De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006a; De Vreese et al., 2006; also Page and Shapiro, 1992).

A general assessment concerning the media effects literature, also regarding the EU, is that it is extant (Azrout et al., 2012; De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2016; Vliegenthart et al., 2008) and has, therefore, become quite differentiated. Many look at the effects on attitudes towards the EU at the individual level (e.g., Ceron and Memoli, 2015; De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2003, 2006a) but also take larger time periods including the news context to explain public opinion dynamics and media effects on society more broadly (e.g., Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart, 2009; De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2016; Vliegenthart et al., 2008). Their results suggest that not only the visibility of EU news has increased, but also that effects of media contents have become stronger.

Representative for many other studies, De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2016: 249/250), looking at EP election coverage between 1990 and 2009, find that higher visibility and a more positive slant of EU news have a positive effect on citizens' support for it; moreover, effects are strongest for the 2009 elections. They qualify their findings by including the aggregate visibility and tone of EU news in the national media and find that the aggregate visibility of the EU in the national news dampens the effects of an individual's exposure to EU news. In other words, effects on the individual are found weaker if media in that country publish a lot of EU news anyway. The contrary effect is observed for tone where the effect on the individual is actually amplified if the amount of evaluative EU news is high in the information environment. Reconnecting to the democratic and communication deficit, they

highlight the lesson that political actors need to learn from this, namely that '[s]taying out of the news is not a viable strategy' (De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2016: 251) – a practice that seemed to prevail in times of the permissive consensus.

In addition, many studies regarding the effects of media contents deal with the national electoral context focusing on the relationship between news consumption and the decision to vote at all, or for one party or the other (e.g., Hopmann et al., 2010, 2011, 2012a; Elmelund-Præstekær and Hopmann, 2012; Kleinnijenhuis et al., 2006). In this respect, visibility in the media has a significant effect on the success of parties (e.g., Rydgren, 2005; Koopmans and Muis, 2009) which highlights the gatekeeping function of the media. Concerning EP elections, some contributions deal with the effect of news coverage on preference formation regarding the *Spitzenkandidaten* – the top candidates that were introduced with the EP elections in 2014 (e.g., Gattermann et al., 2016; Schmitt et al., 2015). Gattermann et al. (2016) find that three factors influence citizens' preferences to vote for one candidate or the other: news exposure, EU political information and specific information about the candidates as communicated in campaigning (Gattermann et al., 2016: 37). In addition, while the literature is too broad to be covered in its entirety here, studies concerning effects on behaviour also look at media effects on social movements (see Vliegenthart and Walgrave, 2012 for an overview) highlighting the mobilising, validating and scope-enhancing effects of media coverage for social movements (Gamson and Wolfsfeld, 1993; Koopmans, 2004): 'A favorable opinion from an involved public is one of the key legitimizing sources for the movements' claims and a powerful tool to exert political influence' (Vliegenthart and Walgrave, 2012: 392).

A small number of studies focusses on policy-specific support, e.g., enlargement policy or Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP; e.g., Azrout et al., 2012; Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart, 2009; De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2003, 2006a; De Vreese and Kandyla, 2009; Maier and Rittberger, 2008; Schuck and De Vreese, 2006). Maier and Rittberger, for example, conduct an experiment with students on the influence of media contents on their attitudes towards EU enlargement policies. They separate three different dimensions

underlying EU enlargement support: The economic performance of the candidate country, the state of its democracy, and how well it matches the EU in terms of culture (Maier and Rittberger, 2008: 259). While it is difficult to generalise their findings due to the limited external validity of experiments and the non-representative sample of only students, their results still suggest a strong impact of mass media contents supporting findings of the positive impact of positive tone on support and vice versa. Studying support for the same policy field, also De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2005, 2006a; also Azrout et al., 2012) come to a similar conclusion identifying attitudes towards immigration, economic considerations and the support for the domestic government as key factors of influence. Moreover, studying support for CFSP, De Vreese and Kandyla (2009) find that framing the policy as a risk as opposed to an opportunity, evokes higher levels of support for it, especially when the risk is related to the nation state and not the EU as such. In addition, the fear of globalisation is found to increase individuals' susceptibility to risk frames.

Media effects studies focusing on support for single institutions are very scarce. Some studies deal with the effects of news on the trust in government (e.g., Avery, 2009; Ceron and Memoli, 2015). Here, media are found to 'act like "echo-chambers" that reinforce pre-existing attitudes' (Ceron and Memoli, 2015: 339) since media bias towards or against government is found to interact with individuals' ideological stances. Moreover, trust in government is found unaffected by media information running counter to their own predispositions which ties into the earlier briefly discussed theory of cognitive consistency (see chapter 3.1). Moreover, Avery (2009) looks at the US context coming to a similar conclusion but relates the unaffectedness to individual predispositions: Citizens that exhibit low levels of trust are not susceptible to news contents whereas citizens with high levels react differently depending on the source of news: They are influenced positively by newspaper contents and negatively by TV news.

Regarding the EP specifically, Nardis (2015) delivers a contribution to the connection between news exposure and voter turnout in EP elections using experimental and survey data for the 2004 EP elections. Trust in the EP, here, is included in a moderated-mediation

model assessing the moderating influence of trust in the relationship between media contents and the decision to cast a ballot in EP elections. Findings suggest that trust in the EP is a strong moderator. Supporting the argument advanced by Norris (2000), Nardis finds that news contents about the EP have a positive impact on trust regardless of the tone of reporting. His results deviate from other works in the national context that find negative news to have a negative influence on both, trust and voter turnout (Kleinnijenhuis et al., 2006). However, much like we have discussed in earlier chapters, a more explicit assessment of how the European and the national level play together when it comes to media effects of parliamentary communication does, to the best of knowledge, not exist. This may, however, be mostly due to the difficulty of obtaining the necessary data for an explicit comparison.

In sum, as De Vreese and Boomgaarden conclude, '[t]he effects of the news media ... are conditional upon the visibility and consistency in tone of the news.' (De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006a: 419). EU news is found to have increased and so have the effects of it. In principle, however, media effects of EU news are still hard to trace and found rather moderate. Against this background, we will now turn to summarising the results of our literature review to identify the gaps which the thesis intends to tackle at least partly.

2.3 Research Gaps and Questions

It seems that research about communication by the EP, about the EP or effects of such communication on public support of the EP is comparably scarce. Regarding studies on communication activities of the EP, research seems rather embryonic but has nonetheless produced some interesting insights. The EP has adapted to the media logic and regarding the quality of EP debates, the discourse is richer concerning the exchange of arguments and justifications than in national parliaments. Regarding parliamentary questions, the multilevel feature allows opposition parties to effectively relocate conflicts with their government to a European stage. In addition, due to the EP's comparatively strong influence on the legislative process, questions are found to be employed to a lesser degree than in some national parliaments that have less influence on policies.

News coverage of parliaments is found to have decreased over time due to the complexity of parliamentary processes and the competition of parliaments with other actors, especially executives. Some activities seem more interesting than others, for example oral questions as opposed to written questions that may raise attention rather for issues discussed but not for themselves as an instrument of parliamentary scrutiny. EU coverage, in contrast, seems to have increased mainly due to the politicisation of European affairs and is found to be strongly influenced and biased by national politics. In addition, public opinion about the EU has an impact on the amount of coverage and explanations for the prominence of the EP in the news follow quite similar patterns. In sum, salience, public support and national politics are important explanations. In addition, trust in the national parliament and the level of domestic party contestation over the EU have an impact on EP coverage – again highlighting the strong influence of the multilevel polity.

Regarding media effects, then, they are rather moderate in terms of substantive size. Nonetheless, research suggests that media visibility strongly impacts on the success of parties in elections, for example. Greater visibility and positive tone are found to positively influence citizens' support of EU membership, but also specific policies such as a common foreign and security policy or EU enlargement. Media effects on EP support are part of a study of effects on voter turnout. Here, results suggest that more visibility of the EP increases support for it, no matter in which direction the conveyed evaluation points.

Summing up, research on communication by and about the EP seems to be in its infancy whereas the effects of such communication on public support for the EP have been mostly neglected. In addition, we lack comparative research on parliamentary communication and its effects concerning the different levels of parliamentary representation in the EU. In an attempt to at least partly tackle these gaps in the literature, the following research questions are proposed.

We look at newspaper contents about the EP to understand the broader discourse. That type of content is analysed to some extent with a focus on the EP's visibility in quality newspapers (Gattermann, 2011, 2013). In addition, most research, even if looking at the EU

as a whole, concentrates on EP election periods (e.g., Boomgaarden et al. 2013). In order to contribute new insights to the discussion, the thesis includes tabloid newspapers in the analysis and compares elections with routine periods. In a first empirical assessment, we evaluate the results of this content analysis guided by the following research question (see chapter 5):

(1) How do newspapers cover the EP in different European member states in terms of visibility and tone?

In addition, it has been shown that the multilevel structure of the EU plays a crucial role in the academic discussion about the EP. Since the potential of the EP to legitimise EU politics is more and more contested, national parliaments and their role in EU affairs are discussed as alternative sources of legitimacy. The comparative potential of both parliamentary levels to attribute legitimacy to EU politics, however, is not empirically analysed so far. It is found that parliaments' newsworthiness has decreased over time. However, public communication or the newsworthiness of both parliamentary levels was not yet considered in a comparative fashion. In an attempt to contribute to the discussion about different parliamentary levels as sources of legitimacy and the discussion on parliaments' comparative newsworthiness, we take communication by parliaments as a proxy of their efforts to become visible and make EU politics transparent to the wider public, and look at how successful they are in terms of gaining publicity in newspapers. Thus, we comparatively explore the visibility of the EP and national parliaments in EU affairs posing the following research question (see chapter 6):

(2) How do parliaments in the EU influence each other with regard to their visibility in the news?

And finally, we make a more explicit assessment of how parliamentary communication actually influences support (see chapter 7). Research, until now, mainly focusses on the EU as a whole (e.g., De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2016). Media effects on support for the EP as the most promising legitimacy source at EU level, however, are mostly left aside (but see

Nardis, 2015). In order to judge how the EP manages to reach out to its constituency and what role the media play in it, we test the influence of the sheer visibility and the evaluations of newspaper contents during election periods. This analysis is guided by our last research question which reads as follows:

(3) How do the visibility and tone of EP newspaper coverage influence public support of the EP?

Overall, the legitimization process of the EP is assessed, starting with the active communication by the EP itself, the visibility and evaluations in the media, and how EP communication, filtered by the media, is received by citizens (see Figure 1 for an overview).

Figure 1: The Assessment of the EP's Legitimation Envisaged in the Thesis



To give the formulated research questions an analytical grounding, we now turn to discussing the PH model of decision-making, adapt it for our purposes and discuss the empirical contexts to which it is applied.

3 The Analytical Framework: Reconciling Disciplines

Very generally speaking, the study of political communication is situated at the interface of political science and communication studies (e.g., Matthes, 2012). Political science, on the one hand, tends to be dominated by economically oriented rational choice institutionalist

theory which is used to hypothesize about actors' behaviour and its outcomes (e.g., Redd and Mintz, 2013; also Saalfeld, 1995). The same is true for legislative studies as the study of the institution of parliament and the behaviour of parliamentarians that primarily rely on the principal-agent approach as a theoretical framework for analyses (e.g., Martin et al., 2014).

On the other hand, communication studies are diagnosed to be under-theorised and, at the same time, influenced by many theoretical approaches – mostly from psychology and sociology, resulting in an identity problem of the discipline (Donsbach, 2006; also Lombard et al., 2002: 587; Matthes, 2012). Conducting a meta-analysis of articles, Potter and Riddle (2007), for example, find that media effects literature is rarely guided by theory and hypotheses are mainly derived from empirical evidence. In addition, a hypothesis about what actually becomes news is extremely difficult to make (Shoemaker, 2006: 111). Apparently, news decisions can be better retraced *ex-post* but not forecasted since '[y]esterday's answers may not be appropriate to explain today's or tomorrow's news decisions' (Reinemann and Schulz, 2006: 1). Considering that news cover the continuously changing agenda of what is happening in the world, this appears to be an intuitive consequence.

It seems that due to the interfaced and pervasive nature of communication itself, also the study of communication is somewhat hybrid and cutting across disciplines and paradigms (Donsbach, 2006). Inherently, the study of media contents and its effects can be perceived as constrained by contingency: 'By calling something contingent, at a minimum we are saying that it did not have to be as it is. Things could have been otherwise, and they would have been otherwise if something had happened differently' (Shapiro and Bedi, 2007: 1). This seems to render the attempt to abstract an overarching theory with predictive power a quite difficult if not impossible enterprise (e.g., Donsbach, 2006) and illustrates why hypotheses in communication studies usually originate in existing empirical evidence only (e.g., Blumler, 2015).

However, also in legislative studies, hypotheses are derived from empirical evidence while some of this evidence became so established that it seems to have achieved the status of a

theoretical assumption over time. As Katznelson and Weingast observe, in rational choice studies on the behaviour of legislators,

‘it can appear that preferences are imputed by the theory alone as an unquestioned prior. But this characterization is inadequate. On closer examination it becomes clear these preferences were induced and, further, that a series of earlier works have shown how they are induced, how they vary across time, and in particular which institutional details explain their emergence’ (Katznelson and Weingast, 2005: 8).

Thus, it appears that empirical evidence is indispensable for meaningful hypothesising in both research areas and that a great deal is contingent upon the actual context in which behaviour is studied. It seems, therefore, that disparities between the two disciplines are not completely irreconcilable. In order to bridge these differences, however, we need an approach in which dominant approaches of both could be subsumed and which would at the same time be inclusive and flexible enough to serve as a theoretical foundation for the study of the EP, media contents and their effects on public opinion.

We believe that these requirements are fulfilled in using a *Poliheuristic* approach. Given the novelty of the approach, we understand its adaption as a broader contribution of the thesis to the discussion about how to theorise political communication while, given our research interest, we rely on only parts of it to underlie our empirical analyses. Thus, the analytical framework developed in the following, may serve as a basic theory to generally explain the behaviour of decision-makers and the outcomes of their decisions, *also* of those assessed in this thesis. It should be understood as an attempt to make the case for a more interdisciplinary conceptualisation of the study of parliamentary or even political communication as such.

3.1 The Poliheuristic Approach: Cognition, Rational Choice, and Contingency

PH theory was originally developed for the analysis of political leaders’ foreign policy decisions and ‘is compatible with a host of *contingency* theories of decision and judgment that attribute to the decision maker sufficient flexibility in adapting the decision process to changing problems and conditions’ (Mintz, 2004b: 7; emphasis added). In essence, it

proposes a two-stage approach to decision-making which combines psychological theories of cognition with rational choice models. Thus, it connects process-oriented views (cognitive approaches) with theory focussing on the outcome of decision-making (rational choice):

‘Poliheuristic theory postulates a two-stage decision-making process in which leaders utilize a dimension-based search of the alternatives, ruling out those that fail to satisfy requirements on a key, noncompensatory dimension in the first stage of the process. ... [This] heuristic (cognitive shortcut) in the first stage reduces the menu of alternatives to a manageable set, reducing the mental effort required in the search for a choice ... In the second stage, a final choice is made through the analytic comparison of the remaining alternatives’ (Brulé, 2008: 268).

Five principles are central to PH theory: Decision-making, in this view, ‘is dimension based, noncompensatory, nonholistic, satisficing, and order sensitive’ (Mintz, 2004b: 7; see also Mintz et al., 1994).

Dimensions are ‘organising theme[s]’ (Brulé, 2008: 268) that comprise aspects of the decision that are relevant for the decision-maker and can be thought of as a group of variables. Examples would be the political or the economic dimension; hence very broad categories of variables. Overall, if one alternative is unacceptable because it is, for example, politically not viable, then the salience of this political dimension may lead to the elimination of the alternative and cannot be compensated by good prospects in another dimension, for example the military (Mintz and Geva, 1997: 85-86); it is especially this *noncompensatory* feature that distinguishes PH theory from other approaches. It is important to understand that these dimensions serve as a shortcut reducing the set of alternatives to be considered in the first place: ‘In other words, in reaching a decision, policy makers first focus on dimensions and then on alternatives’ (Mintz, 2004a: 92). In this respect, dimensions relate to the first stage of decision-making and, therefore, relate to the individual opinions of decision-makers of what is viable in a certain situation *before* calculations of risks and benefits for these alternatives are conducted in the second stage of decision-making.

The finding of a subset of viable alternatives is defined as *satisficing* since not all existing alternatives are considered: It is sufficient for the decision-maker to find an acceptable option which satisfies certain requirements instead of engaging in a *holistic* calculation of pros and cons of *all* possible choices (also Simon, 1956). *Order-sensitivity*, then, appears to

be a logical consequence since the order in which alternatives are considered may determine not only how long decision-making may take – hence how much time has to be invested. Evaluating one alternative before another may also lead to the first alternative being chosen without even considering a second one if the first one is found satisfying (also Pierson, 2000a). The subset resulting from all these considerations, then, provides the alternatives which are pondered in the analytical calculation of costs and benefits bearing in mind the constraints that the environment poses for the individual.

As such, this PH approach is rather young (Stern 2004) and is most prominently advocated by Mintz and colleagues (Mintz, 2004a, 2004b; Mintz and Derouen, 2010; Mintz and Geva, 1997; Mintz et al., 1997). While scholars admit that it is until today not entirely clear if all epistemological differences between cognitive and rational choice approaches have been addressed sufficiently in PH theory (Eder 2012), comparisons to other approaches such as groupthink, prospect theory and pure rational choice (Redd and Mintz, 2013) consider it a promising approach having the ‘potential to serve as a conduit between rational and cognitive approaches’ (Brulé, 2008: 266).

PH theory has been used to understand and explain decision-making in foreign policy and has done so by enriching a ‘content-free’ (Brulé, 2008: 269) analytical model of decision-making with empirical information about, for example, the characteristics of leaders and the expected hierarchy of relevant dimensions considered in decision-making. Thus, the basic model of a two-stage mechanism of decision-making has been adapted to the analysed environments to enable the researcher to formulate meaningful expectations. Methodologically, scholars have used experimental designs to get at the process of choice search explicitly (Christensen and Redd, 2004; Mintz et al., 1997); they have also employed large-N statistical analyses (Brulé and Mintz, 2006; DeRouen, 2000; DeRouen and Sprecher, 2002) to test general assumptions about the outcome of decisions. Apart from these, many studies have been produced using individual case studies addressing both the process and the outcomes of decision-making processes like, for example, the behaviour of leaders in the

Cuban missile crisis (see Brulé, 2008 for an overview). Overall, empirical research has confirmed the robustness of PH theory.

Sketching a framework for the analysis envisaged in this thesis, we transfer the PH approach to another context and even discipline. We cannot do so, however, without reflecting on the differences in environments and possible adaptations that have to be made (e.g., Collier and Mahon, 1993). As such, we use it to give our hypotheses a theoretical foundation. We conduct a statistical analysis focussing on the outcome of decisions. We look at individual decision-makers at an aggregate level, perceiving institutions as a collective of individual actors operating in a defined environment. Moreover, we do not look at policy outputs but at legitimization processes, thus essentially at how this collective of individual actors, e.g., parliamentarians, manages to maintain their own positions in terms of power, i.e. legitimate themselves. Power relations are deeply embedded in institutional structures providing the incentives and constraints for actors to behave in one way or the other. And thus, the legitimization of institutional arrangements is central for the maintenance of the power of actors operating within them (e.g., Pierson, 2000b).

PH theory takes into account the constraining or incentivising environment via the broader notion of dimensions. However, given the importance of institutional structures for our study, we believe it is necessary to reflect more explicitly on the institutional environment. Given the centrality of contingency for the study of media communication and its effects, we draw on (HI) as an established institutionalist theory in political science with a strong focus on the uniqueness of situations and decisions in time (Pierson, 2000a, 2000b; North, 1990; Streeck and Thelen, 2005; see also Bannerman and Haggart, 2014). In the following, we introduce the basic theorem of the PH decision-making process in more detail and connect it to HI to form an overarching theoretical model for the study of the EP's legitimization process.

3.1.1 First Stage: Cognitive Processing and Choice Search

Concerning the human mind's processing of incoming information, several psychological factors are believed to influence the cognition process and the evaluation of incoming information. In the theory of cognitive consistency, one of the main aspects in cognitive

processes is that pre-existing frames or beliefs structure the attention to or the negligence of information: If it corresponds to what an individual already knows or believes, it will be considered and discarded or ignored if not: 'In essence, we are talking here of closing off one's mind to anything not compatible with pre-existing beliefs during a decision' (Mintz and DeRouen, 2010: 98).

Another important factor refers to the salience of information or 'the "immediate concerns" that are foremost in the mind' (Mintz and DeRouen, 2010: 99; also Nelson et al., 1997) which are evoked, e.g., by events that are so salient that decision-making has to consider this event and it is difficult to re-orient attention away from it. Another factor that is perceived as influential in this respect is emotions (e.g., Crigler and Just, 2012): hatred, fear, love, anger, desire for revenge, insecurity, disgust, panic, anxiety, etc.. Emotions can narrow the choice set by influencing the cognitive capacity of the individual making the decision. They can also attribute salience to incoming information and orient attention towards the salient topic (Mintz and DeRouen, 2010: 100; also Lecheler and De Vreese, 2012). Thus, emotions can evoke a selection of immediate concerns that influence how information is evaluated.

An individual decision-maker, hence, does not react to objective reality but to her subjective perception of the situation. 'Frames', organised in a belief system, are found to be a fundamental part in how she perceives it (Holsti, 1962: 244): In contrast to the more immediate nature of emotions, frames are more persistent and cannot change easily since the belief system constitutes a network of mutually supportive frames (Converse, 2006). Frames, also described as beliefs or images¹, are 'a sort of stereotype that the mind uses to categorize events and people' (Mintz and DeRouen, 2010: 101). As Holsti sums up:

'The belief system, composed of a number of "images" of the past, present, and future, includes "all the accumulated, organized knowledge that the organism has about itself and the world" (Miller et al., 1960, p. 16). It may be thought of as the set of lenses through which information concerning the physical and social environment is received. It orients the individual to his environment, defining it for him and identifying for him its salient characteristics. ... images may be denoted as subparts of the belief

¹ Note that we will stick to the term 'frame' to equal the terms belief, schema or image. While these terms have been produced in different contexts, we believe they overlap to a great extent (see, for example, Cacciato et al., 2016 for a recent discussion of the concept of framing).

system. Like the belief system itself, these are "models" which order for the observer what will otherwise be an unmanageable amount of information' (Holsti, 1962: 245).

The belief system represents what we know and think about the world, but it also limits what we get to know about it and how we evaluate new information in terms of cognitive consistency. Information processing can be influenced by prior experiences providing individuals with shortcuts or heuristics: 'Analogies help us to make sense of the environment and new situations ... [by reflecting] back to past events that presented similar circumstances, alternatives, and potential outcomes' (Mintz and DeRouen, 2010: 103; also Anderson 1998). Re-connecting to the psychological factors discussed above, the individual is not believed to employ a holistic consideration of all alternatives, rather the choice set is reduced employing a non-compensatory analysis in the process of which alternatives are discarded on the basis of heuristics (Mintz, 2004b: 3). On the basis of this reduced set, then, the decision-maker moves on to the next stage which is characterised by a rational calculation of costs and benefits to maximise utilities in choosing one of the viable alternatives.

3.1.2 Second Stage: Maximising Utilities in Uncertain Environments

The rational choice approach is derived from a long-standing tradition that originates in economic theory, in which actors follow a 'logic of consequence': It presupposes actors to be rational, striving to maximise their interests, minimize costs, risks or losses while constrained by the institutional structures surrounding them (e.g., Hall and Taylor, 1996). Due to its parsimonious, 'lean' but, therefore, also strict and exclusive design with regard to basic assumptions, the central rational choice model can be applied to very different environments (e.g., Saalfeld, 1995). However, it is criticised that these assumptions fail to predict a broad range of decisions that actors make in reality (e.g., Redd and Mintz, 2013). It focusses on the outcomes but not the actual process of decision-making. For this reason, it does not 'fully describe how decision-making is affected by cognitive biases ... how information processing is limited and how various biases, search patterns, and [cognitive] decision rules affect decision-making' (Mintz and DeRouen, 2010: 8/9).

As stated earlier, we use HI to more explicitly reflect on the influence of the institutional or organisational environment which is to be maintained by legitimation processes. As such, HI is used as a macro theory of institutional change. It 'accords agents an important role in institutional transformation while recognizing that the prevailing institutional context also sets the parameters for agents' attempts to alter this context' (Cortell and Peterson, 2001: 769). HI scholars stress time as a crucial factor, e.g., the order of events, and resulting power relations manifested in institutional structures (Pierson, 2000a): '[E]arly developments get deeply embedded in a particular ... environment, modifying the incentive structures and hence behaviours of social actors, and thereby changing the social significance or pattern of unfolding of events or processes occurring later in the sequence' (Pierson, 2000b: 79). This connects to the centrality of order-sensitivity in PH theory as discussed above.

The notion with which HI is most commonly associated is the idea of path dependency stressing the efforts that have to be undertaken to reverse particular courses of action that were introduced (Pierson, 2000a: 251). Such courses of action ultimately result in the creation or reconfirmation of existing institutions. Institutions

'provide the framework through which human beings interact. They establish the cooperative and competitive relationships which constitute a society and more specifically an economic order... [They compose] the institutional framework which constrains people's choice sets' (North, 1981: 20, cited in Sparrow, 2006: 150).

While rational choice institutionalist theory follows a formal and, therefore, rather narrow definition of institutions, 'historical institutionalism sees institutions as including both formal and informal institutions. Specifically, institutions are defined as "the *formal or informal* procedures, routines, norms and conventions embedded in the organizational structure of the polity or political economy" (Hall and Taylor, 1996, p. 938)' (Bannerman and Haggart, 2014: 5; emphasis added). With regard to our goal of using an adapted PH-HI approach as an overarching analytical framework to study parliamentarians, journalists, and citizens, it is exactly this broader definition of HI that enables us to include, e.g., formally defined parliamentary procedures and journalists' routines which, due to the more fluid agenda of journalists' work, tend to be more informal in nature.

Still, distinct from the definition of a political institution, economic enterprises competing on a market, are perceived as human activity characterised by 'two fundamental and opposing requirements: the division of labor into various tasks to be performed, and the coordination of these tasks to accomplish the activity' (Mintzberg, 1983: 2). Also political institutions, then, can be perceived as organisations, just that they serve the greater purpose of *constituting* the rules of the game in a society (North, 1990). They are subject to specific demands for legitimacy since they define these rules. News organisations, in contrast, are part of that game, i.e. the economic order that is established by institutions. While they have certain functions constituting the rules of the game, too, they also have to work for their own profit providing distinct goods for their customers.

Media organisations' functional logic is more ambivalent than that of a political institution such as a parliament: They have to maintain their legitimacy in fulfilling societal expectations, but they also need to act as a credible, i.e. predictable and consistent (e.g., Bentele, 1998), participant of the market in order to survive. Reconnecting to the notion of path dependency, once successfully established, institutional or organisational structures become rather inert due to the success they have and the investments that have been made to create them: 'With increasing returns, actors have strong incentives to focus on a single alternative and to continue down a specific path once initial steps are taken in that direction' (Pierson, 2000a: 254-256).

Many studies of HI focus on so called critical junctures that punctuate an institutional equilibrium, such as revolutions or coups d'états. In this window of opportunity, it is argued, institutional change can happen and established structures can be more or less radically re-organised (e.g., Katznelson, 2003). Confronting this rather static idea of institutional change, Streeck and Thelen (2005) in their volume 'Beyond Continuity' argue that change can also occur incrementally and slowly alter structures, triggered by external or internal factors, without any kind of institutional 'tabula rasa' to begin with. This is well captured in the idea of unintended consequences, which proposes that actors only intend to be rational but are, in the end, bounded because they can never foresee future developments and, thus, can

never have absolute knowledge (Pierson, 1996: 126; Simon, 1955). While they seek to maximise their interests and try to minimise investments and risks, they can never know if they will reach the anticipated goal due to the uncertainty of the future. Reconnecting also to our first stage of decision-making, they are bounded in getting *and* processing information. They are 'choosing organisms of limited knowledge and ability' (Simon, 1955: 114).²

Power and its legitimation are central to the study of politics (e.g., Beetham, 1991). And legitimation is understood as a communicative effort in the attempt to maintain power structures, thus as the process by which consent-givers, i.e. citizens, are to be convinced that the present distribution of power is worthy of being accepted. This is mirrored in HI's strong focus on power balances embedded in institutional structures:

'Where certain actors are in the position to impose rules on others, the employment of power may be self-reinforcing. Actors may use their political authority to change the rules of the game ... to enhance their power. These changes may not only shift the rules in their favour, but increase their own capacities for political action while diminishing those of their rivals' (Pierson, 2004: 36).

Hierarchies, therefore, are an important constraint for rational actors which they may have to take into account when anticipating risks and benefits of their decisions. Concerning organisations, for example, 'shifts in power seem to lie at the root of transitions ..., [and the consideration of such developments] ... may help to explain not only how organizations survive and develop, but also how they stagnate and falter' (Mintzberg, 1984: 208). In this vein, power is defined as an actor's ability 'to effect or affect organisational outcomes' (Mintzberg, 1983: 4) which, essentially, is based on the classic definition by Weber introduced earlier (Weber, [1921] 1980).

² Note that the concept of bounded rationality as suggested by Simon (1955) differs from poliheuristic theory in the way that it still follows the reasoning of rational choice postulating a simultaneous consideration of all possible alternatives. In poliheuristic theory, in contrast, the order of stages is important: In stage one, alternatives are reduced to a viable set which then serves as a basis for rational considerations: 'Poliheuristic theory explicitly postulates a two-stage decision making process in which decision makers simplify the problem. Rather than assess all alternatives simultaneously, decision makers are thought to break the problem into manageable portions' (Brulé, 2008: 283). Thus, while the outcome seems to be similar, the account of how it is arrived at differs. As will also become clear later on, this approach is mirrored in the overall discussion of public opinion research which includes heuristics and shortcuts as tools to reduce the complexity of the rational choice calculus.

The account of the individual's decision-making process can be aggregated at a collective level which is how we will employ the approach. Abstractly speaking, in PH theory,

‘... decisions may involve the input of a number of individuals whose preferences must be satisfied, depending on the institutional structure of the decision making unit (Stern 2004: 110). ... such decisions can also be fruitfully addressed as an n-actor, m-dimensional bargaining scenario in which preferences are aggregated according to the two-stage process Poliheuristic theory describes’ (Brulé, 2008: 283).

If all members possessed the possibility to veto decisions, for example, only alternatives viable for all individual members would survive and could serve as a basis for rational calculations by which the group would intend to maximise its utilities. In contrast, ‘a final choice could reflect the weighted preferences of an individual with a greater "stake" in the decision’ (Brulé, 2008: 283). The actual outcome, thus, depends on how collective decisions are reached – a process that may differ considerably considering, for example, different forms of majority voting in a parliament, hierarchies in news organisations where it may eventually be the editor who decides on the basis of what reporters offer, or elections in which the first past the post may win all seats for a district (as in the UK) or interests may be represented proportionally.

3.1.3 An Adapted Poliheuristic Historical Institutional Model

Summing up, in the first stage of decision-making, the focus is on how the human mind makes sense of incoming information, i.e., by employing ‘mental shortcuts and other ... [tools] indicative of the mind's inability to carry out the complicated calculus of the rational model’ (Mintz and DeRouen, 2010: 8). In that respect, cognitive processes are not irrational but mirror this inability to consider *all* alternatives and to choose the one that maximises utilities. In the second stage, then, the individual intends to maximise its utilities based on the earlier identified subset of viable alternatives but is limited by the uncertainty or contingency of reality. The underlying goal of (a collective of) decision-makers in this thesis is the legitimisation of their own power embedded in institutional arrangements. Such arrangements can be altered unintendedly due to cognitive and external constraints. In sum, we perceive the rational actor as constrained or incentivised at different levels: by her cognitive predispositions during the first stage of decision-making and by the environment in

which she operates during the second stage of decision-making (see Figure 2 for an overview).

Overall, cognitive theories can complement the rational logic by making the processes preceding rational decisions a subject of reasoning. It is, hence, the essence of the PH approach that it ‘bridges the gap between cognitive and rational theories of decision making’ (Mintz, 2004b: 3). In addition, complementing the PH model with HI allows us to subsume different strands of scientific debate under one theoretical roof. Consequently, we perceive the approach as an adequate tool to not only bridge theoretical strands but also bridge scientific disciplines for a more reflective study of parliamentary communication and its effects.

Figure 2: Constraints and Incentives for Rational Actors at Different Levels

The Rational Individual Decision-Maker and Her Constraints/Incentives at Different Levels		
Micro: Cognitive Predispositions	Meso: Surrounding Institutional Structures in which Power Relations are Embedded	Macro: Contingency/Uncertainty of Reality

We establish the plausibility of the applicability of our framework further in the following sections addressing the three types of actors central to our analyses (see chapter 3.2). In particular, we discuss existing cognitive and rational choice as well as sociological approaches and studies in the respective field. In doing this, we collect the empirical information that academia has produced to contextualise the theoretical model and explain the background in which MEPs communicate, in which journalists cover the EP, and in which citizens decide to find the EP and its performance legitimate or not.

It must be noted that the following discussions necessarily cannot deliver an in-depth assessment of every aspect that has been studied so far. This is due to the breadth of literature that has to be taken into account. In addition, we also introduce the approach to spark discussion about a further theorisation of the legitimisation process as envisaged in this

thesis; however, we do not apply it in its entirety here and, therefore, concentrate more on the theoretical foundations needed for embedding our empirical analyses, i.e. the chapter on journalists in particular. For this reason, we highlight the main patterns identified in research needed to establish the plausibility of our approach and elaborate somewhat more on those parts that are directly relevant for the empirical investigations to follow.

3.2 Collecting Contextualising Information

The purpose of the following section is twofold. On the one hand, it situates the questions addressed by this thesis in a greater scientific context. On the other hand, it provides the information needed to contextualise the PH-HI approach regarding three different environments. While our research interests eventually lie in the communication by MEPs, the way journalists cover them, and what effect communication has on public support, it is important to also understand the background environment since it is this background environment that is legitimated by communication. We, therefore, look at the societal expectations that are formulated towards actors (the greater context), the findings regarding cognitive predispositions that are influenced by these expectations and the structural environment in which expectations are embedded.

The three different environments follow different functional logics. For this thesis, we look at the legitimisation process of one individual institution that is part of a greater regime, not at politicians in general. Thus, the environment of the EP is distinguished from the other two which are broader and are investigated more broadly. This is mirrored by the fact that we often discuss the broader EU literature, inferring from the greater context to the individual institution, since literature about the EP is rather scarce in terms of communication.

We start the individual discussions with an overview of the greater context, i.e., what functions ought to be fulfilled by the actors under review in order for them to increase the likelihood of being evaluated as legitimate; in the case of citizens, then, we reflect on what functions public support has for the EU's parliament. For all three environments, we then turn to a discussion of the literature arranged along the two stages of decision-making, thus

focusing on cognitive and rational choice studies. In the last sections, then, we focus on communication and its effects in discussing the literature on parliamentary communication, i.e. communication by parliaments, communication about parliaments in the media, or its effects on public support. In doing this, we identify the research gaps which this thesis is going to address.

3.2.1 Understanding the Environment of European Parliamentarians

This chapter is dedicated to explain the environment in and about which parliamentarians communicate and what incentives and constraints they encounter in their efforts to pursue legitimacy. Consequently, concerning the second stage of decision-making, we have to understand the underlying purpose of the institution of parliament in order to understand what would most likely be perceived as legitimate by the public and would, therefore, be a goal of parliamentarians striving to legitimate their own power. Furthermore, following HI, we have to look at institutional structures to understand what constraints parliamentarians as decision-makers are subject to. Eventually, we need to look into parliamentarians' individual predispositions representing the first stage of decision-making in the PH model to understand how their decisions might be influenced by cognitive limitations or biases.

The Greater Context: Functions of (the European) Parliament

A number of catalogues of parliamentary functions were developed to define their tasks (Bagehot, [1867] 2009; Fenno, 1978; Norton, 1993; Marschall, 2005; Mill, [1861] 1998; Pakenham, 1970). Notwithstanding the differences in what functions are highlighted, however, all catalogues do more or less explicitly allude to the same two underlying categories of functions of parliaments arranged by the answer to the question: Who's the addressee of action? That is either (mainly) the government or (mainly) the citizens (Norton, 1993). Similarly, functions can either be derived from the constitution or can be more normative in nature (Raunio, 2011: 305): Normative functions refer to what tasks parliaments are supposed to fulfil in order to provide legitimacy for representative democracy; such as creating legitimacy of political processes by debating them and communicating them to the public, but also holding the government accountable on behalf of the citizens via, e.g., oral questions (citizen-oriented). Electing the government or the

processing and approval of laws are seen as tasks that are referred to in the constitution; such tasks are then considered to be more government-oriented.

Implicitly building on this twofold distinction, the literature has defined two ideal types of parliaments that constitute a continuum with extreme points rather than a binary categorisation (Steffani, 1979). Parliaments may be working types in the sense that they stress work in committees rather than public discussion. The Finnish Eduskunta, for example, can be considered a working parliament (Raunio, 2015). A debating parliament, in contrast, focusses on activities in the plenary, on public debate; here, the classic example is the British House of Commons (Steffani, 1979).

To put the EP in a category here, we must take the differences into consideration that exist between the national and the European level. In contrast to national parliaments, due to the multinational character of the EP, there are national delegations organised in European party groups which are, however, not subject to any kind of party discipline (Hix and Hoyland, 2013). In addition, since there is no single government or constitution at EU level, constitutional functions should more correctly be called functions derived from the Treaty of the EU, or governments-oriented functions for the EP. A sophisticated definition of the EP is given by Dann (2002, 2003) who characterises the EP as a special case of a working parliament with a strong emphasis on output legitimacy:

‘..., the EP can basically be regarded as a working parliament. Nevertheless, ... certain features of it seem to be quite original to the EP. These features justify that we consider a third type, which can be seen as a sub-category of the working parliament. This type shall be named more precisely as a ‘controlling parliament’. As such it employs basically the same instruments as a working parliament ..., but its powers are generally more of a negative, controlling and preventing nature than an autonomously creating one’ (Dann, 2002: 23).

This is closely connected to the way the EU legislative system is organised: In contrast to national parliaments, the majority in the EP does not form a government, and the EP does not have the right to initiate legislation which is the prerogative of the Commission. Its main roles refer to the legislation process, supervisory and budgetary tasks (European Union, 2017b). Thus, despite the fact that it is directly elected, the EP appears to be more of a second legislative chamber (Yordanova, 2011) than a ‘traditional’ parliament as we know it

from the national context. In terms of control, the EP has some controlling powers over the Commission but is far from having control over the executive in the same way as parliaments do at the national level. Still, the EP's influence on EU legislation is direct compared to the indirect impact that national parliaments have via (more or less effectively) controlling their governments (Crum and Fossum, 2009: 253; Raunio, 2011: 307).

Reconnecting to the discussion of the democratic deficit, the transfer of competences to political decision-making bodies beyond the nation state increased output legitimacy but decreased legitimacy on the input side (e.g., Kraft-Kasack, 2008). Concluding from its definition as a controlling parliament, the EP's functions relating to the control of executives and legislating more generally seem much more in focus than communication and citizen-oriented functions. This mirrors what we have discussed earlier, namely that political leaders expected input legitimacy of the EP (and legitimacy of the EU as such) to grow stronger with a greater emphasis on the EP's output legitimacy – thus, an increase of competencies. This anticipated effect, however, does not seem to have occurred which is the puzzle this thesis addresses.

Most recently with the Lisbon Treaty, the EP was strengthened by increasing the use of the ordinary legislative procedure in which the EP operates as an equal partner of the Council. The pattern of increasing competencies of the EP reoccurred in the course of European integration due to the fact that for a long time, 'the "obvious" solution to the EU's legitimacy deficit was to strengthen the EP' (Sternberg, 2015: 623; also Magnette, 2001). Regarding its institutional development, therefore, deeper integration in the EU went hand in hand with the empowerment of the EP (Hix and Hoyland, 2013). In this respect, there is agreement that 'the EP has been able to effectively exploit gaps in the treaty by providing its own interpretation of the rules and hence by challenging their interpretation and application by the Member States' (Rittberger, 2014: 1177; also Hix, 2002a; König, 2008). This statement was illustrated most recently with the fact that, according to MEPs' interpretation of the treaties, the Spitzenkandidat with the majority of votes in EP elections became president of the Commission – a automatism that powerful member states such as Germany and the

United Kingdom had fiercely opposed (e.g., Müller-Gómez and Wessels, 2015; Schmidt, 2016).

Underlying the EP's employment of its own strategic arguments is the backing by a more normative claim which gained importance with the increasing politicisation of EU politics: The EP as the only directly-elected institution incorporates the principle of representation and thus, 'the self-interested behaviour of EU actors ... is constrained by a standard of legitimacy, based on the liberal democratic values and norms the EU vows to uphold' (Rittberger, 2014: 1176; also Schimmelfennig, 2010; Rittberger and Schimmelfennig, 2006; Rittberger, 2003, 2005). In this view, European decision-makers empowered the EP to legitimise EU politics. But also the EP itself resorted to these normative claims to exert pressure on members to expand its own competencies (Rittberger, 2014).

Overall, HI analyses assessing the course of EU integration as such highlight that short-term concerns of member states, unintended consequences and the instability of policy preferences – and not only the strategic behaviour supranational actors autonomously – have led to losses of member states' control and opened up new possibilities for institutional change (Pierson, 1996). The EP effectively tapped the arising opportunities in the course of integration and used them to its own advantage; however, its striving for power was supported by favourable circumstances. In the following, we look at how the expectations that are directed towards the institution of the EP are manifested in institutional structures constraining and incentivising MEPs in their striving for legitimacy.

Stage II: Parliamentarians' Rational Calculations of Costs and Benefits

The study of legislative studies in political science is dominated by rational choice approaches embedding the behaviour of parliamentarians in a principal agent model and thus seems to focus more on the second stage of decision-making in our PH-HI model. In essence, the relationship between a principal and his agent includes a transfer of authority from principal to agent which we discussed in earlier chapters. In this view, parliamentarians can be seen as agents of their constituency. This transfer, however, brings certain dangers with it because agents are entrusted with tasks that they fulfil rather independently. Thus, if

principals, that usually transfer tasks to reduce costs, do not wish to engage in continuous immediate control, they need to be able to trust their agents. As discussed earlier, institutional arrangements are designed to control the agent, so that agents must be transparent about their behaviour, signalling to their principals that they can be trusted in order to maintain their positions (Behnke, 2008).

Moreover, the way how parliamentarians perceive their own work is studied by focusing on their roles: '[L]egislative roles can be viewed as behavioural strategies conditioned by the institutional framework in which parliamentarians operate' (Strom, 1997: 157; also Strom, 2012). The strategies that parliamentarians apply are directed towards certain career goals that are often categorised as policy-seeking, office-seeking, or vote-seeking in terms of being (re-)selected as a suitable candidate by their party and elected by their constituency (Müller and Strom, 1999). Some analyses of career paths of MEPs assess the influence of external factors, such as office benefits and policy influence. In general, it is found that the second order nature of the EP has made it difficult for legislators to build a career there since MEPs work usually remains rather invisible outside election campaigns. In addition, since MEPs legislate at EU level only, their work is heavily influenced by developments that are out of their immediate control 'such as whether their party happens to be in government and the political issues on the agenda in their member state' (Whitaker, 2014: 1).

The EP is believed to be 'freer than most national parliaments to deliberate in the absence of executive domination or rigid party disciplines' (Lord and Tamvaki, 2013: 28). The absence of such discipline could be assumed to result in the predominance of national interests and thus in a rather unstructured picture regarding cleavages given the heterogeneity of national parties' stances that unite in party groups (Hix and Hoyland, 2013; Hix et al., 2009). However, Hix et al. (2005) observe that MEPs seem to be ideologically motivated in roll-call votes suggesting that political party groups in the EP are surprisingly cohesive (also Bardi et al., 2014; Hix, 2002b; Hix and Lord, 1997; Raunio, 1997), even more so the bigger they are or become. In conclusion, national interests play less of a role than one might expect: Given the increased policy influence of the EP, it seems worth being cohesive. Thus, ideological rather

than national cleavages and a genuine left-right competition within the EP emerged. In addition, another cleavage line in the EP is the attitude towards (the extension of) power and scope of the institution (McElroy and Benoit, 2007). In principle, however, policy-making in the EP is found to be rather consensual (Hix and Hoyland, 2013).

Some factors may undermine cohesiveness in party groups nonetheless, i.e. the greater salience of national interests (Finke, 2014), interests of opposition parties punishing their government (Jensen et al., 2013) or the interests of individual MEPs in terms of re-election (Faas, 2003). Thus, domestic conflicts may find their way into the EP mirroring domestic government-opposition disputes and attitudes towards EU integration as such (Hix et al. 2006). Overall, national parties are still regarded key players: They control who becomes MEP in the first place which takes away one major incentive for cohesiveness from EP party groups (Hix et al., 2007). Regarding MEPs' chances for re-selection, studies usually stress seniority and membership in powerful EP committees as positive influences (Frech, 2016; Ghergina and Chiru, 2010). In addition, non-mainstream parties may re-nominate experienced candidates more often, and in doing this, second-order EP elections may serve as a 'first-order contests for second-order parties' (Daniel, 2016).

One incentive for cohesiveness that can be employed by political party groups in the EP is the prospect of important offices, like party whip or speaker of a committee. Committees are seen as representative for the EP's work as such in terms of policy positions and the composition of the EP as such (McElroy, 2006, 2008). Committee membership is seen as a way for MEPs to specialise themselves and gain seniority. Assignments of such offices are deemed detached from partisan considerations (Yordanova, 2009).

Yordanova (2011) states that the legislative environment in which the EP operates changed extremely fast over the course of integration. In her view the external institutional setting of the EP has to be taken into consideration when assessing it as an object of research. With regard to extra-parliamentary constraints and incentives that MEPs have to deal with, the EP's strength and influence on EU legislation has been difficult to investigate empirically since it is difficult to trace the EP's or individual actors' influence ex-post (Hix and Hoyland,

2013: 178). Results, therefore, remain somewhat tentative which may be seen as the result of this rapidly changing environment in which the EP functions (Yordanova, 2011). It may, however, also be due to different methods and data used for analysis (Hix and Hoyland, 2013: 176-178). Regarding the interplay between institutions, cleavages are often found between intergovernmental and supranational institutions (e.g., Schmidt, 2016; Wallace et al., 2015). This is also expressed in the introduction of the Spitzenkandidaten procedure which also institutionally links parliament and Commission more closely in a supranational camp (e.g., Christiansen, 2016). Overall, the ever more discussed democratic deficit and control by a stronger EP have led to a politicisation of the Commission and recruitment of, e.g., commissioners (Wille, 2012).

Another important aspect of the EP's extra-parliamentary environment is its relationship with NPs which seems especially interesting for any study concerned with parliamentary representation and its legitimising potential for the EU. After all, representation at the national level could be a better or at least an alternative or complementary source of legitimacy for EU politics. The academic discussion about this topic mainly revolves around the central question if and under what conditions parliaments in the EU are competing, cooperating or complementing each other. It focusses on theoretical issues (Crum and Fossum, 2009; also Benz, 2003; Evas et al., 2012; Hooghe and Marks, 2003; Kohler-Koch and Rittberger, 2006; see Benz, 2016 for a recent comparative overview), interparliamentary cooperation (Crum and Fossum, 2013; Heffttler and Gattermann, 2015), and interinstitutional dependencies or institutional developments (Auel and Rittberger, 2006; Neunreither, 1994, 2005; Katz and Wessels, 1999; Raunio, 2000; Winzen et al., 2014).

More empirically oriented studies investigate different policy fields and instruments, such as the Early Warning System (Cooper, 2012) or the Conference of Parliamentary Committees for European Union Affairs (COSAC) in which both parliamentary levels are represented (e.g., Crum and Fossum, 2013). Herranz-Surrallés looks at foreign policy and finds that while cooperation would be desirable from a normative point of view, the more undefined a field is in EU politics in terms of hierarchies and competences, the more likely parliaments will

compete with each other (Herranz-Surrallés, 2014: 971, see also Peters et al. 2010). Winzen et al. (2014) look at the co-evolution of the parliamentary institutions at both levels suggesting that EP-critical parliaments tend to install strong oversight institutions in response to EP empowerment. Overall, there seems to be a gap between the normatively desired cooperation between the two levels that is advocated in usually more theoretically-oriented literature and the actual competition assessed in empirical studies finding that both levels try to guard sovereignty and establish their superiority, especially in policy fields in which hierarchies are not explicitly defined (Kiiver, 2006; Herranz-Surrallés, 2014).

The discussion of the literature shows the EP as a rather unique legislature due to the multilevel character of the EU and its European yet nationally fragmented constituency. Constraints and incentives for MEPs, therefore, span two political levels. This complicates their work because they are affected by developments that are out of reach. It is also more challenging since their constituency in most cases is further away and more difficult to reach. Having sketched the external environment of MEPs, we now turn to the first stage of decision-making zooming in on MEPs' cognitive predispositions.

Stage I: Cognitive Predispositions of MEPs

Frameworks that more or less explicitly include rational choice *along with* cognitive approaches – and thus implicitly follow a PH logic – can be found in studies dealing with career paths of parliamentarians (e.g., Scarrow, 1997) or learning processes, i.e., the adaptation of MPs to an ever more internationalised political environment (Franklin and Scarrow, 1999; Kerr, 1973; Scully, 2005; Schneider et al. 2014). More broadly, the characteristics of individual MPs are often included in studies in which the individual level plays a role or even is the starting point (e.g., Lord and Tamvaki, 2013; Whitaker, 2014).

Concerning empirical data sources on the cognitive predispositions of MEPs, a survey with MEPs is conducted regularly by the European Parliament Research Group at the London School of Economics and Political Science since 2000 (Farrell et al., 2011; also Bowler and Farrell, 1993). The survey includes questions concerning different sorts of cognitive predispositions like views of EU politics or general political attitudes and presents a highly

relevant source of data on the first stage of decision-making concerning the EP's legitimisation process. Data have been used for many different purposes (see London School of Economics – Department of Government, 2017). However, such studies do usually not focus on MEP's attitudes alone but on answering research questions for which knowledge about predispositions is necessary or helpful. Such topics comprise, for example, the individual campaigning to EP elections, voting behaviour of MEPs or studies on the political ambition and behaviour of MEPs.

Mirroring our two stages of decision-making, Schneider et al. (2014) posit that '[t]he subjective importance individual MPs attach to EU affairs for the success of their own political work is based on *individual beliefs and calculations of costs and benefits*' (Schneider et al., 2014: 411; emphasis added). They find that the perceived salience of EU issues and their own perceived influence on EU politics that is the strongest motivator of regional MPs to get involved in EU policy making. Regarding the influence of MEPs' work on their cognitive predispositions, Kerr (1973) studies the impact of the EP on social learning and attitude change of MEPs and compares them to their national colleagues. He finds that while knowledge increased, MEPs do not become less hostile or more Europhile during their participation in EP politics. Some 30 years later, also Scully (2005; also Franklin and Scarrow, 1999) looks at MEPs' attitudes and behaviour assessing what learning or adaptation processes occur. And also he finds only minor differences between national parliamentarians and MEPs. MEPs' attitudes seem also unrelated to their seniority in terms of how long they have served in the EP and thus the hypothesis of an occurrence of institutional socialisation of MEPs is rejected.

In addition, findings of Lord and Tamvaki (2013) suggest that MEPs refer to their national and the European constituency rather than a global citizenry which would hint towards a more cosmopolitan understanding of their role as representatives. Studying MEPs' attitudes towards their job, also Scully and Farrell (2003) find that 'most MEPs interpret their own representative role broadly, believing that they have important responsibilities towards multiple "constituencies"' (Scully and Farrell, 2003: 285; also Scully et al., 2012). However,

they also find that the individual self-perception of law-makers plays a great role in understanding how MEPs view their job and parliament as an institution.

Studies on career paths of parliamentarians often use ambition theory (Mezey, 1970, Schlesinger 1966) to identify determinants of behaviour. Parliamentarians, here, are seen as 'rational actors who make political decisions consonant with their political ambitions in order to maximize the probability of realizing these ambitions' (Mezey, 1970: 564). Almost all elected officials are believed to be ambitious but ambition is individually different since it is an individual 'desire for political self-enhancement' (Costantini, 1990: 741) conditioned by opportunity structures in the environment. Ambition may be seen as a result of the personal biography which defines what career goals a parliamentarian pursues. Studies investigating these research questions usually employ biographical data such as prior experience in international institutions to incorporate individual characteristics and attitude data such as their political stances or ideology (Meserve et al., 2009; Daniel 2015; also Whitaker 2014). In sum, '[p]olitical careers are seen as being shaped by the interplay of individual ambition and the institutional structure of opportunities' (Borchert, 2011: 117) which again mirrors the two stages of decision-making represented in our PH-HI approach.

Looking at MEPs in particular, Scarrow (1997) defines three types of legislative careerists. First, there are MEPs that plan their careers exclusively at EU level. Second, MEPs use the EP as a stepping stone to collect experience for their career in domestic politics. And third, some MEPs end their career with the EP. She finds that the number of MEPs that pursue an exclusively European career – thus the first type – is increasing. Similarly, also Whitaker (2014) suggests that turnover decreased and the EP seems to have become more attractive to develop a legislative career (also Hix et al., 2007). He connects this to the increased powers of the EP, thus to the external incentives discussed earlier. It may also be seen as an expression of the ambition of MEPs to stick together in order to increase their political power and effectively use the resources available.

In conclusion, while cognitive approaches do not seem to feature very prominently on legislative studies' agenda, the literature still provides some insights to beliefs and intrinsic

motivations of parliamentarians at the EU level (see Table 1 for an overview). Mirroring the dominance of rational choice approaches, the discussion about institutional constraints and incentives seems much more elaborate yielding detailed insights about the constraints of the institutional environment. Against this broader background, we move on to the next environment to show how our PH-HI approach can also be applied to the work of journalists.

3.2.2 Understanding the Environment of Journalists

This chapter is dedicated to explaining the environment in which journalists cover the EP and thereby create publicity for it, and what incentives and constraints they encounter in their efforts to establish themselves as a legitimate and credible source of information. In our first section, we look at the greater normative context and the expectations that are connected to media in democracy – i.e. how they should perform in order to increase the chance of being considered legitimate. Due to the multi-faceted and even ambivalent nature of expectations and functions of the media in democracy, and the centrality of the media for the legitimization of the EP as analysed in this thesis, this chapter is given more attention. It can, however, touch upon some discussions that have sparked major debate in communication studies only briefly, e.g. the mediatisation of politics. The second and third section focusses on the individual journalist and cognitive predispositions as well as the organisational context in which the rational journalist operates.

The Greater Context: Functions of the Media in (European) Democracy

As discussed earlier, modern democracy needs the media to function on a larger scale with mass constituencies: ‘In present-day Western democracies, the media are the key intermediary between political actors and citizens’ (Tresch, 2009: 67). This is because public communication is difficult to organize in a direct, inter-subjective, face-to-face manner in the daily political business (Örnebring and Jönsson, 2004: 284, citing Thompson, 1995). It needs the media to create, what we have earlier termed *publicity*, namely that they need to make the citizenry aware of the information that political actors make transparent (Hüller, 2007: 563). The mass media constitute the public sphere as the main mechanism of the diffusion of information, ideas and debates and the assessment of news contents, and about EU

politics in particular. Thus, it is a way to assess the well-being of democracy as such (De Vreese et al., 2006: 478).

Media in their different forms and outlets are believed to fulfil at least three functions in democratic politics. Firstly, democracy needs citizens to be informed to some degree. In this respect, the media function as providers of information about the political reality, or, put differently, as chroniclers of what is happening in the world (McQuail, 1992). Accordingly, they 'should give an accurate account of important events, actions, and interventions within the institutionalized arenas of the political system and make the political process transparent for the citizen public' (Tresch, 2009: 70; also Anderson, 2007: 65). Secondly, the media have been described as a watchdog or 'fourth estate' critically scrutinising the powerful and their behaviour on behalf and with permission of the citizens (Patterson and Donsbach, 1999; also McNair, 2000; Trenz et al., 2009). Their task then would be to 'spotlight and draw public attention to problems and situations that need solutions and repair' (Shoemaker, 2006: 108). Thirdly, media are an interface between elected politicians and their constituency and represent a mirror of public voice, i.e. in the form of letters to the editor, but they may also function as an advocate of political actors or specific stances (McNair, 2009: 239; also Donsbach and Wenzel, 2002: 374). Overall, they have two roles of providing factual news on the one hand and opinion on the other hand (Tresch, 2012).

Journalistic cultures differ between countries. Comparative research on different media systems has proven to be rather challenging and is, until today, mainly influenced by the seminal work of Hallin and Mancini (2004; also Hanitzsch et al., 2010; see Hallin and Mancini, 2016 for a recent overview of the literature) who arrange their comparison along four dimensions including political and social aspects that echo the functions described above. The first one is the development of media markets: This dimension deals with the degree to which newspapers are circulated amongst citizens as a proxy of how inclusive the press market is. The underlying question is if media address elites only or if they serve as information providers for everyone, also citizens not necessarily involved and/or interested in political affairs.

Secondly, the category of political parallelism describes the degree to which newspapers follow the line of a political party more or less closely, i.e. if the media system is a mirror of the party system in a country. This is connected to the development of the commercial press which does not serve political parties any more but grows independent of politics and produces news to make money: Commercialisation, in this respect, is defined as 'any action intended to boost profit that interferes with a journalist's or news organization's best effort to maximize public understanding of those issues and events that shape the community they claim to serve' (McManus, 2009: 219). Mirrored in this definition is the criticism that commercial press or tabloid journalism is more entertainment-oriented than serving the public good in informing citizens to the best of their knowledge (Örnebring and Jönsson, 2004). Still, some scholars view it as 'entirely appropriate that some media should provide only a basic news service that the "monitorial citizen" merely scans, while other media offer fuller news coverage and commentary to satisfy the demands of the news junkie' (Aalberg et al., 2010: 257).

The commercialisation of the media brings about a notion of journalists as independent observers rather than political advocates. Moreover, '[t]hough the true party press has almost disappeared, and even if the political tendencies of European newspapers are fuzzier today than they were a generation ago, distinct political tendencies persist, more in some countries than in others' (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 27). Commercialisation has changed the media market fundamentally over the last 50 years increasing competition with emerging new and much faster ways of communicating and a growing ephemerality of news (Blumler and Kavanagh, 1999; Blumler and Gurevitch, 2001). But at the bottom line, we can conclude that the power of political actors over the media has decreased considerably (Tresch, 2012).

In addition, journalists may perceive political institutions in a more 'sacerdotal' or more 'pragmatic' way: The term sacerdotal alludes to the fact that journalists in some countries (e.g. in Spain, see Van Dalen, 2012) regard political actors and institutions as newsworthy per se, treat them with respect and even ascribe them a degree of 'sacredness' (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995: 50). In more pragmatically-oriented countries (e.g. in the UK or Germany,

see Van Dalen, 2012), in contrast, politics is evaluated equally to other news items and thus, has to fulfil standards of newsworthiness in competition with other stories to actually make it into the news (Van Dalen, 2012: 37; also Esser, 2008).

This finding is also connected to another category introduced by Hallin and Mancini (2004), namely the degree of journalistic professionalism: Professionalism is not only associated to the qualifications a journalist must have in order to be allowed to work. More importantly, it refers to the autonomy of journalists, if distinct norms for journalistic work exist, for example how common it is to follow ethical standards such as the protection of sources, how dedicated journalists are to serve the public good in their work as opposed to only their own interests, or how standardised routines of news selection are. Last but not least, Hallin and Mancini incorporate the role of the state in constraining or supporting media in their framework, i.e. the role of public broadcasting, press subsidies, or the legal framework (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: Part I, chapter 2; see also Bannerman and Haggart, 2015).

Apart from being a channel and a forum for debate, the media are a free participant of public communication (Wessler et al., 2007: 94): '[M]edia are not simply an amplifying mechanism of European news-making; the media are also an independent actor who is deeply engaged in 'making European news'' (Trenz et al., 2009: 343). They form modern public communication because they decide about the contents they transport. It is, therefore, essential to not only reflect the role that the media play in EU democracy, but also to what extent they must be seen as an autonomous actor influencing expectations of politics (Page, 1996; see also De Vreese, 2007: 273). In this context, journalists have been described as 'gatekeepers':

'[G]atekeeping is a ... complex process, involving decisions about the amount of time/space allotted to a news event, where within a publication or news program the story is placed, the use of graphics, and number of stories about the event on one day or across days, and whether the story returns in a cyclical pattern' (Shoemaker et al., 2009: 75).

In a similar vein, the 'influence of the news agenda on the focus of public opinion' (McCombs, 1997: 433; McCombs and Shaw, 1972; McCombs, 2004) has been studied intensely under the headline of agenda-setting. Agenda-setting is not believed to be a

primary goal of journalists; rather it is a necessary by-product: It is mostly born out of the need to select some news items out of a whole universe for publication (e.g., Walgrave and Van Aelst, 2006). However, in making this selection, some news is made visible while other items are dropped or not even considered for publication. In this respect, the curve of issue salience and of mass media and public attention are found to be closely correlated (McCombs, 2004: 37). Consequently, the media should be seen as a generator, catalyser and mirror of societal change (Sarcinelli, 2012: 273). For this reason, '[European] integration [scholars] need to understand how the media act as selective amplifiers of political information about the EU and how selected outputs are turned into news that shape the political reality of Europe' (Trenz, 2008: 303).

The growing importance of the media for democracy has led to what has been termed the 'mediatisation' of politics in the sense that media influence the operational logic of the political system (Altheide and Snow, 1979; Hjarvard, 2008; Mazzoleni and Schulz, 1999; Michailidou and Trenz, 2010; Strömbäck and Van Aelst, 2013). The phenomenon has been critically studied with a special focus on the possible negative influences of the media on the political process since politics was believed to be reduced to a kind of theatre play staged for the media and their audiences (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995; Mazzoleni and Schulz, 2010). The criticism, essentially, is that mere media attention-seeking of politicians would lead to a depletion of representative democracy if the wrapping of political messages got more important than the contents of political communication themselves (e.g., Blumler and Kavanagh, 1999). In this context, also the growing autonomy and the dependence of politicians on the media are focussed on as 'attending to communication through the media ... [has more and more become] an integral part of the interrelated processes of campaigning, cultivation of public opinion, policy-making, and government itself' (Blumler and Kavanagh, 1999: 214; Kriesi et al., 2010: 224; Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Swanson and Mancini, 1996; also Cook, 2006: 167).

As an institutional manifestation of the vital importance of the media, political institutions have incrementally changed their institutional structures over time, created press units and

developed strategies to cater to the media, catch their attention and make themselves visible, corroborate their own relevance in the political game and ‘reinforce their own position in the policy-making process’ (Kriesi et al., 2010: 228). In this respect, Anderson and McLeod (2004) discuss the EP’s adaptation to the media in a rather critical contribution. Listing several difficulties, e.g., unclear responsibilities and a lack of infrastructure, they conclude that ‘an organisation that acquiesced so readily in the fostering of the conditions likely to lead to its own demise would deserve to be abolished’ (Anderson and McLeod, 2004: 916; see Gavin, 2001 for a similar argument concerning EU institutions in general). In her PhD thesis of 2011, however, Gattermann addresses this criticism and finds, based on interviews with newspapers correspondents in Brussels that the EP’s PR apparatus has changed: It has revised its institutional prerequisites and today is, as one interviewee put it, almost surprisingly easily accessible. Thus, the EP seems to have adapted to catering to the media’s needs very successfully (Gattermann, 2011: 104-106). Overall, following a HI logic of incremental, continuous change (Streeck and Thelen, 2005), mediatisation may essentially be seen as a necessary historical development, a ‘longer term process by which political systems and political actors adapt to the emergence of new media of communication and to the increasing specialization of tasks common in modern societies’ (Negrine and Lilleker, 2002: 307/308).

Having discussed the greater context in which journalists’ work is embedded, we now turn to sketching the discussion about work routines, organisational standards as well as constraints and incentives from outside the news organisation itself. In doing this, we arrange the literature according to the two stages of decision-making that we have introduced earlier looking at cognitive studies on the one hand and studies on the external environment of journalists providing incentives and constraints for rational behaviour on the other hand.

Stage II: Journalists’ Rational Calculations of Costs and Benefits

In the terminology of rational choice, organisational structures are the constraints that journalists have to consider in their calculation of costs and benefits. The literature on the topic is mainly grounded in a more sociological view of human behaviour and not in rational

choice. However, it identifies the relevant structures to take into account when considering influences in journalistic work and, as mentioned already, can be subsumed under the broader definition of institutions in HI.

Organisational structures are believed to have developed over time in response to the heavy workload of newsmakers: to routinize procedures to adapt them to the production of news which may easily have to cover very unexpected events such as disasters or accidents: '[N]ews media develop standard routines and practices ... [considering] whether or how they will make a profit ... and find timely information' (Sparrow, 2006: 145). Such routines have been found to be surprisingly invariant across different media environments (Becker and Vlad, 2009).

One aspect here is how journalists get the information they need to produce news. In this respect, Tuchman (1978) describes the acquisition of information as a net that is 'flung through space, focusses upon specific organizations, and highlights topics' (Tuchman, 1978: 25). A central concept is the notion of 'beats' as geographical foci, institutions or issues to which reporters are assigned. For example, newspapers disperse their reporters to observe the parliament or the chancellery or send them abroad as correspondents, etc. In this context, the reporter, much like a parliamentarian, develops his role in the sense of 'behavioural strategies conditioned by the institutional framework' (Strom, 1997: 157) and more generally, the environment in which she operates. This also concerns the network of sources which the reporter can contact in her research for a new story.

'[C]ontrol of knowledge is central to development and maintenance of power' (Donohue et al., 1973: 652). With regard to political coverage, the power balance between media and politics is often researched and described as a sort of symbiotic relationship or a tango in which either or may do the leading (Gans, 1980; also Strömbäck and Nord, 2006; Van Aelst and Vliegenthart, 2014). Both politicians and journalists depend on each other: politicians need the media to reach their constituency and advertise their positions while journalists need their sources to be able to report and perform in competition with other media organisations (Van Aelst et al., 2010: 311-312). In that respect, research has not found an

absolute answer to the question who is leading. Rather, 'which partner is dominant over the other depends on the context and focus' (Van Aelst and Vliegenthart, 2014: 392). In addition, a large strand of literature has also highlighted the importance of media salience for the political agenda, e.g., in parliament (e.g., Helfer, 2016; Vliegenthart et al., 2016; Vliegenthart and Mena Montes, 2014; Walgrave and Vliegenthart, 2010).

Moreover, reporters are expected to keep up with what is happening because one of the main expectations that newsmakers have to meet is the suggestion of stories which, ultimately, are the product with which they compete on the news market (Gans, 1980; Sparrow, 2006). The news organisation has to provide a distinct competitive news product, and consequently organisational routines are also followed to attract certain audiences in response to economic pressures (Becker and Vlad, 2009: 66). News items are, therefore, selected in line with the editorial slant of the organisation (Donsbach, 2004: 149). Within news organisations – as in other organisations, too – power is dispersed hierarchically: The editor of a newspaper, for example, is the ultimate decision-maker, responsible for its contents and the editorial line while reporters have to operate along this line and ultimately, have to convince their editor of the newsworthiness of their story. In this respect, the organisation of news can informally be divided 'between journalists (notably reporters) who judge a story from the perspective of sources and those, such as top producers and editors, who look at it from the viewpoint of the audience. ... In reality, however, no one can ever afford to side entirely with either sources or the audience' (Gans, 1980: 89). And therefore, the process of making news is always a process of balancing the expectations and demands of sources and the audience for the purpose of succeeding on the news market.

Illustrating this, a recent POLITICO article discusses how different Murdoch newspapers supported different stances during the campaigning for the Brexit referendum in the UK. While belonging to the same news company, the Times and the Sun advocated different positions because, as journalist Ken Doctor argues, deviating from an established, earlier developed line would 'tarnish ... the brand, [which is] bad for business' (Doctor, 2016). Following the HI logic of path dependency, the newspaper would then leave an established

path for the gain of an uncertain future and risk losing its earlier investments when getting negative feedback. In sum, therefore, '[o]rganizations make decisions to reflect some aspects of their communities and reject others, to provide a mix of news that is more serious or more entertaining, to downplay or play up news of conflict and news about crime' (Becker and Vlad, 2009: 66). These decisions are mirrored in the different routines of outlets, especially concerning more commercial or tabloid news and broadsheet newspapers or public broadcasting (e.g., Franklin et al., 2005). It is, therefore, not surprising to find that different outlets of news organisations and their editorial lines exert a strong influence on the form and contents of news.

For example, tabloid newspapers historically emerged as a new, smaller, time-saving and easier-to-handle format. However, from 'the very beginning, the tabloid press was criticised for sensationalism and emotionalism, for over-simplification of complex issues, for catering to the lowest common denominator and sometimes for outright lies' (Örnebring and Jönsson, 2004: 287). Apart from these normative judgments, an established finding in the literature is that tabloid newspapers report more negatively, much less about politics and less about the EU in particular, than broadsheets which are connected to more serious journalism and are regarded opinion leaders in some cases (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996: 120). Their influence is usually measured by the influence of their readership which tends to consist of representatives of the political elite. In this respect, they are characterised by high circulation, a higher level of education amongst their readership, and their high influence on other media concerning the form and contents of news.

In sum, news organisations are situated in a field of competing forces including the market, politics creating the legal framework of news, newsmakers' sources as informants but also lobbyists for visibility at the same time, and last but not least, their audience. The audience's approval and loyalty is essential for any news organisation's survival and hence, the anticipation of readership interest, as i.e. mirrored in public opinion, as well as the pursuit of a once successfully established slant path are central (e.g., Wadbring, 2013). Audiences, here, comprise not only citizens as readership but also other, competing, journalists

evaluating the quality of news produced by their peers (Tuchman, 2002: 80; also Donsbach, 2004). Thus, journalists' work is constrained by the accessibility of sources and market considerations, such as limitations of space, while they need to remain a credible provider of a distinct news product at the same time (see also Gans, 1980; Shoemaker and Reese, 1996; Sparrow, 2006; Zaller, 1999). Against this background, we now turn to the first stage of decision-making zooming in on journalists' cognitive predispositions.

Stage I: Cognitive Predispositions of Journalists

'Mass media content is a socially created product, not a reflection of an objective reality' (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996: 251) and 'journalists' news decisions are a highly complex phenomenon and a challenge to communication research' (Donsbach, 2004: 131). This is due to the fact that the amount of existing information, i.e. from their own sources or also other media, confronts journalists with the challenging task to select news items for publication and thereby select which aspects of reality they want to make visible in public. Donsbach (2004) explains the 'psychology of news decisions' by reducing the motivations of journalists to two aspects: 'a need for social validation of perceptions and a need to preserve one's existing predispositions' (Donsbach, 2004: 131).

The former basically includes the necessity to check with peers since journalists have to make decisions about what reality they want to create (e.g., Festinger, 1954): Journalism is a 'risky business. Journalists have to decide what is true, what is relevant, and, in a moral sense, good or bad' (Donsbach, 2004: 136; also Shoemaker and Reese, 1996). As we have elaborated in the preceding chapter, such decisions have to be made in a constraining environment setting journalists under severe time and competition pressure, while at the same time lacking objective selection criteria and being confronted with an immediate publicity of their decisions. Therefore, concerning the decisions of the journalist to select one news item over another for publication is a subjective one in a situation that is characterised by great uncertainty. To reduce this uncertainty, journalists validate decisions inter-subjectively by checking if their perceptions of reality are shared by their colleagues (Hardin and Higgins, 1996). Journalists are also found to have more similar attitudes and beliefs than other professions (Donsbach, 2004: 143). In addition, journalists covering the

same issues often share similar attitudes and perspectives (Schudson, 2003; Van Dalen et al., 2012). On that common basis, it seems they 'play it safe by sticking with the pack' (Crouse, 1972: 15; also Frank 2003) which is not only one aspect of the power that media have over the public agenda, but can also lead to surprisingly homogenous news across outlets. In this respect, research has found that British correspondents in Brussels are often more Europhile in their evaluations of EU politics than their colleagues at home – a phenomenon that has been called 'going native' (Gavin, 2001; Morgan, 1995; Pryce, 1979).

Concerning the preservation of own pre-dispositions, the selection procedure is found to be highly influenced by journalists' own opinions and their perceptions of the role they are supposed to play. Such roles are believed and found to 'determine what the communicator thinks is worth transmitting to his or her audience and how the story should be developed' (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996: 103). One reason for assuming a strong influence of predispositions on news contents is the fact that journalists have to be very selective in a timely manner in what they choose to publish and thus, own predispositions may be seen as a coping mechanism. In his theory of instrumental actualization, Kepplinger et al. (1991), for example, find that journalists tend to attribute a higher news value to items which correspond with their own opinions on the issue (also Van Dalen et al., 2012).

Also other empirical studies find that the ideologies, attitudes and professional norms of journalists are most influential (Donsbach, 1981; Gans, 1980; Scheufele, 1999; Shoemaker and Reese, 1996; also Brüggemann, 2014). In a survey with Danish, German, British and Spanish journalists, Van Dalen et al. (2011, 2012) investigate differences in journalistic roles. They find differences rather across countries than within countries or across outlets: 'Spanish political journalists see their role as more sacerdotal and partisan than their colleagues in northern Europe, while British journalists are most entertainment oriented' (Van Dalen et al., 2012: 903). As one of few studies, they connect survey data on journalists' attitudes with the news contents they publish finding that entertainment-oriented journalists also produce entertainment-oriented news covering conflicts and featuring, for example, the private life of politicians (Van Dalen et al., 2012: 915). Thus, their research can

be read as a confirmation of the robustness of the PH two stage model by looking at cognitive predispositions and linking it to the output produced.

The discussion of ‘what kinds of organizational or structural factors of the media system, or which individual characteristics of journalists, can impact ... news contents’ (Scheufele, 1999: 115) is extremely multi-faceted and sophisticated and too broad to cover here. Generally speaking, it focusses on if and how journalists set up their stories: how they make some aspects (more) visible than others and/or evaluate items in one way or the other (Boomgaarden and Semetko, 2012; Cacciatore et al., 2016; Eberl et al., 2015; Entman, 1993; Hopmann et al., 2010, 2012b; Kioussis et al., 2006; Takens et al., 2010; also McQuail, 1992).

One of the most influential frameworks for the analysis of news contents is the concept of news values (Harcup and O’Neill, 2001, 2016). The ‘salience’ of events, actions and interventions is evaluated by virtue of their newsworthiness. However, the concept is in itself a slippery one that cannot serve to predict news. This is due to the fact that ‘newsworthiness is a cognitive construct, a mental judgment. ... Newsworthiness is only one of a vast array of factors that influence what becomes the news and how prominently events are covered’ (Shoemaker 2006: 105). In addition, newsworthy characteristics can also be perceived to be part of the construction of a story rather than the event or the issue itself. Thus, the aspects of an event that appear to have made it newsworthy *ex-post* also depend on how the story itself is set up (Shoemaker, 2006).

Reconnecting to the above discussion about the influence of journalists’ personal opinions and pack journalism, there seems to be a tacit agreement among professionals regarding when news is worthy of being published (O’Neill and Harcup, 2009; also Donsbach, 2004). The actual selection procedure is described as intuitive rather than based on objective standards. Ultimately, this makes the concept of newsworthiness contingent and ‘one of the most opaque structures of meaning in modern society’ (Hall, 1973: 181, quoted in O’Neill and Harcup, 2009). Accordingly, studies of news factors have mainly produced more or less extensive lists of the most common factors identified empirically *ex-post* that serve to formulate expectations (most prominently: Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Harcup and O’Neill,

2001, 2016; see also Vos, 2014). As the most important, the relevance, salience or proximity of events, power or influence of involved actors, conflict, magnitude with regard to the amount of people affected by the news, personalisation of news and especially the negative consequences of an event have been listed (Becker and Vlad, 2009: 62; also Bennett, 1990; Eilders, 2006; O'Neill and Harcup, 2009; Shoemaker, 2006; Tresch, 2009; Vliegenthart et al., 2008).

In conclusion, 'news is both an individual and an organizational product' (Becker and Vlad, 2009: 59) and the result of how expectations, external constraints and cognitive predispositions play together (see Table 1 for an overview). Consequently, and following the HI logic, we perceive news contents as contingent, as results of unique historical, societal and political constellations and situations, produced by individual journalists. In this respect, Shoemaker and Reese (1996) summarise that

'[i]nfluences on media content can be ranked hierarchically, from the ideological and other macrosystem-level factors to the more micro characteristics of individual media workers. Each level has its own range of influence but is subjected to and has limits set by each hierarchically superior level. What explains the role conceptions of journalists? Their socialization to the routines of the workplace. Why do such routines exist? In order to meet organizational standards and goals. What is the source of these standards and goals? Pressures from advertisers and audiences, sources, the market economy, and so on. Why do these extramedia factors relate to the media in the way they do? Because of ideological and cultural imperatives on the role that the mass media should play in society' (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996: 252, emphasis in original).

In sum, journalists have different functions for society, ranging from transmitters of information to the provision of opinion. Journalists have become more independent from politics also as a result of the commercialisation of the media and mediatisation has forced political institutions to adapt their functional logic to the media's needs. Differences in media systems exist concerning the inclusiveness, the degree of professionalism of journalists, the legal framework and the degree to which journalists follow party lines. They are constrained by the hierarchy of their news organisation, their access to sources and market pressures while they have to satisfy their audience. In this respect, they have to make decisions in an uncertain environment with a heavy workload which is why they cross-validate their own perceptions with their peers; moreover, their own predispositions serve

as a coping mechanism which tends to result in coverage corresponding with journalists' own opinions.

Concerning the EP as a topic, we have discussed in earlier chapters how the EU as an issue has been unpopular due to the amount of contextualising information that journalists would need to explain it to their audience. The crisis, however, seems to have increased the salience of EU topics which has expanded its visibility in coverage. Against this background, we now move on to our last environment to discuss the citizens.

3.2.3 Understanding the Environment of Citizens

In this chapter, we shed light on the environment in which citizens react to media contents about the EP. As opposed to the other two chapters on MEPs and journalists, citizens per se are not part of an organisation for which they need to maintain legitimacy or credibility for competition on a market. Quite the opposite: Citizens are the ultimate consent-givers to what parliaments or the media produce. Therefore, the chapter is designed to follow a somewhat different logic than the preceding two. Here, we are interested in how the actions of parliamentary and media actors are received, thus how citizens react to them. While our main concern is the attitudinal dimension, in line with our research question, we consider the behavioural dimension as well to complete the picture: This would concern, for example, voting behaviour which may, inter alia, be viewed as expression of the legitimacy for the elected institution. It would also include protests and social movements. Eventually, this research clearly illustrates the legitimacy deficits of EU politics and we do not want to leave it completely aside.

The first section is dedicated to more normative and conceptual issues concerning public support for the EP as a single institution of a regime. In the second and third part, the two stage process of decision-making is in focus again when looking at incentives for citizens to express their legitimacy of and participate in democratic (EU) politics; the last part, then, looks into the discussion about cognitive predispositions of citizens when it comes to the EP.

The Greater Context: Functions of Public Support for (the European) Parliament

Regarding the importance of public support for the EP, Gabel (2003) argues that it is a crucial aspect of the EU's legitimacy for normative reasons: '[A] parliament designed to represent citizens *ought to* enjoy public respect and support' (Gabel, 2003: 290; emphasis added). As we have discussed earlier, it embodies the institutionalised principle of representation which, eventually, enables democracy on a larger scale. It is also important as an incentive for MEPs because a non-appreciated parliament is not an attractive place to work or pursue a career. It may eventually increase turnover and the efficacy of the institution if legislators do not bother to also try and make unpopular or highly contentious decisions. Most importantly, however, if the EP is regarded a superfluous part of the political system, it may in the long run lead to its abolition or at least hamper its further empowerment and undermine its authority (Gabel 2003: 290). In this respect a parliament as the core democratic institution may influence satisfaction with democracy and the democratic process, or if the whole system is good or bad thing (Bellucci and Memoli, 2012: 12).

In a similar vein, elections are usually found to maintain and further public support and legitimacy for a political system (Finkel, 1985, 1987; also Dalton et al. 2011) since they provide the momentum for citizens to feed in their preferences into the democratic system. Also European elections 'were organized with the aim to increase interest in and support for the 'European project' and to increase the legitimacy and accountability of European democracy' (Van der Brug and De Vreese, 2016a: 277). However, as Beaudonnet and Franklin (2016) contend, European elections in fact – if even shortly and weakly – decrease the legitimacy of the EU since elections are not perceived to have any consequences. This, as the authors observe, is a well-known fact among academics, commentators and politicians, but not among citizens: '... [O]nce every five years, everyone is reminded of the time that is apparently pointlessly wasted during EP election years. ... European political life, in the aftermath of an EP election, would appear to be proceeding as though no election had taken place at all' (Beaudonnet and Franklin, 2016: 212). Hence, as discussed extensively, the EP is a strong legislative player on a par with the other EU institutions; it is backed by the democratic virtue of election and the direct legitimation that comes with it. However, while

the EP is the only directly elected institution at EU level which should supposedly enhance its legitimacy it seems that it is precisely the link to its electorate that presents one of the most fundamental aspects of the EU's democratic deficit.

Regarding a conceptualisation of public support for the EP, empirically oriented research on legitimacy essentially builds on the concept of political support (Westle, 2007: 93). It is considerably influenced by the pioneer work by David Easton (1965, 1975; see Booth and Seligson, 2009) for whom public support 'refers to the way in which a person evaluatively orients himself to some [political] objects through either his attitudes or his behaviour' (Easton, 1975: 436). His systemic view of public support has served as a blueprint for the majority of studies on public opinion and has found supporting evidence, too (e.g., Boomgaarden et al., 2011). The most important distinction is made between diffuse and specific support based on the insight that

'[s]ome types of evaluations are closely related to what the political authorities do and how they do it. Others are more fundamental in character because they are directed to basic aspects of the system. They represent more enduring bonds and thereby make it possible for members to oppose the incumbents of offices and yet retain respect for the offices themselves, for the way in which they are ordered and for the community of which they are part' (Easton, 1975: 437).

The distinction, thus, on the one hand concerns a more diffuse attitude towards the system or a principle and must be perceived as a more long-term oriented aspect of support. Easton himself defines it as being more durable and independent of outputs, underlying the regime or the whole community (Easton, 1975: 444/445). He also defines diffuse support as the main source of legitimacy (Booth and Seligson, 2009: 8). On the other hand, the day-to-day practices of authorities seem to be subject of a more specific evaluation of their performance. The orientation here is more short-term and will vary with the degree of satisfaction or advantages won. The result of such calculations of benefits influences the degree of support (Easton, 1975: 439).

In their study on the 'Mapping of EU Attitudes', Boomgaarden et al. (2011) connect Easton's distinction with other concepts of public support and legitimacy since they are found to overlap to a great extent. As already evident in Easton's discussion of the two modes of

support, specific support seems to be more output-oriented and utilitarian whereas diffuse support alludes to more affective attitudes towards a system, or the sense of community – to input legitimacy as Scharpf understands it (Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970; Niedermayer and Westle, 1998; Scharpf, 1999). Following Easton, as well as based on the considerations discussed in Boomgaarden et al. (2011: 244/245), we eventually understand diffuse support as referring to a long-term, affective attitude towards a principle or a regime as such, for the EU example as ‘a diffuse and perhaps emotional response to some vague ideals embodied in the notion of the European unity’ (Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970: 40). This type of support is usually operationalised as support for the way that political output comes about or the quality of the processes via which output is produced in terms of transparency, accountability, legality or credibility (Hurrelmann et al., 2009).

It seems necessary to distinguish the two dimensions on a theoretical level since giving up this approach would come at the cost of obscuring underlying mechanisms. Such underlying mechanisms would, for example, explain positive attitudes in one policy field and negative attitudes in another (Easton, 1975: 444). The empirical applicability of Easton’s framework has, however, been contested (e.g., Boomgaarden et al., 2011; Gabel, 1998) since ‘[i]t is a distinction resting on differences of motives for supportive behaviour which would be extraordinarily difficult to distinguish empirically’ (Loewenberg, 1971: 184). Because of these empirical difficulties, legitimacy research has to build on the concept of political support including both dimensions even if legitimacy is thought of being influenced by diffuse, rather than specific support. Another reason to include specific support in an operationalisation of legitimacy is the fact that legitimacy, expressed in compliance with undesired requirements, can also be due to coercion or self-interest, thus based on utilitarian and output-oriented motives (Schmidtke and Schneider, 2012: 226; Easton, 1975; Weber, [1921] 1980). Hence, it is acknowledged, already by Easton himself, that the distinction is analytical in nature and rather hard to measure in absolute empirical terms.

In addition, looking at a single institution, we must distinguish different objects of legitimation – thus different reference objects that are evaluated in terms of their

legitimacy. Such have been defined by Easton while later concepts have built on his ideas and extended them (e.g., Bellucci and Memoli, 2012; Fuchs, 1989; Dalton, 2004; Norris, 1999). For Easton, objects of legitimacy are the community, political regime and the political authorities. However, according to Norris,

‘there are significant theoretical and empirical gradations within different parts of the regime. Yet in practice citizens do seem to distinguish between different levels of the regime, often believing strongly in democratic values, for example, while proving critical of the way that democratic governments work in practice’ (Norris, 1999: 9).

For this reason, influenced by the works of Dalton and Klingemann, she proposes a more fine-grained categorisation for the regime eventually resulting in three new categories: regime principles (core values of the political system), regime performance (the functioning of the regime in practice), and regime institutions (the actual institutions of the government) (also Dalton, 1999, 2004; Klingemann, 1999; see Figure 3).

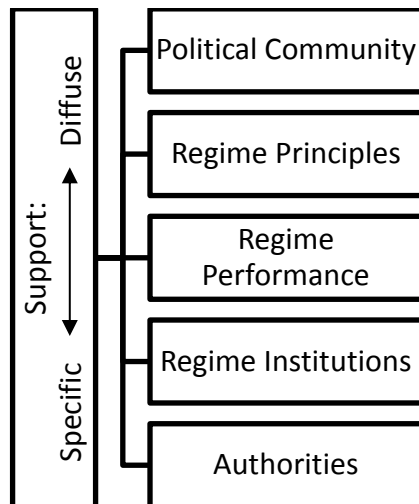
A sense of belonging to a political community is regarded the ‘basic attachment to the nation beyond the present institutions of government and a general willingness to co-operate together politically’ (Norris, 1999: 10); therefore, it is mostly related to diffuse support and, accordingly, it ranges at the end of the continuum. At the other extreme of the continuum, we find authorities, which is explicitly related to specific support and concerns citizens’ immediate experiences with authorities and their evaluations thereof (see Figure 3 for an overview).

The interesting category for the study at hand, however, is the category of regime institutions to which we also count the EP. It is conceptualised to be grounded in specific rather than diffuse support. However, there are some rather genuine aspects about the EP that give reason to believe that diffuse support may play a very important role concerning its legitimacy (e.g., Ringlerova, 2015).

This is connected to the remoteness and low salience of EU issues. To illustrate, Caldeira and Gibson (1995) observe for the European Court of Justice (ECJ) that

'[t]ransnational political institutions cannot rely upon the "presumption of legitimacy" associated with national institutions. Since nation-states enjoy a higher level of allegiance from citizens than do transnational polities, the most direct and common source of legitimacy for institutions such as the Court of Justice is either not available or significantly diminished. Moreover, since these institutions are relatively new, tradition cannot sustain them' (Caldeira and Gibson, 1995: 359).

Figure 3: Levels of Political Support and Reference Objects; Source: Norris, 1999: 10



The ECJ is found a rather obscure institution operating outside most citizens' immediate daily political experiences. Therefore, citizens judge the ECJ based on their attitudes towards the EU as such and their opinions on broader basic values like the rule of law or individual liberty: 'In other words, lacking specifics, people make inferences and draw conclusions about particular institutions based on their general values and preferences' (Caldeira and Gibson, 1995: 356). Thus, as Gabel (2003) argues, also the support of the EP may be perceived as built on general values and preferences rather than an evaluation of the EP's daily performance. Ringlerova's (2015) results corroborate these insights by stating that support for the EP is very diffuse which leads to a rather stable basis of support for it. In addition, these general values and preferences are assumed to 'reflect other, more firmly held and extensively developed, political beliefs that are a result of citizens' experiences with domestic political reality' (Anderson, 1998: 573). As we shall further discuss later on,

the national context is indeed a strong influence regarding citizens' perceptions of EU institutions.

Furthermore, a parliament is not only an institution but a collective actor with different operating levels. In this respect, Marschall (1999) distinguishes the individual parliamentarian, party groups, and the parliament as a whole as different hierarchically ordered units. In this respect, Easton conceptualises different sources of legitimacy for the regime categories and authorities. In his view, legitimacy can either come from a moral conviction of validity in terms of ideology, the belief in the validity of the structures and norms constituting the system, or the belief in incumbents based on their personal qualities. Personal qualities of incumbents foster what he calls personal legitimacy (Easton, 1975: 457) and thus, while it is unclear to what degree, the 'bad behaviour' of an incumbent of an important office, in case of the EP the president for example, may in the long run also lead to lower appreciation of the EP as an institution, much like the bad reputation of a party group can do the same.

Having discussed the normative and conceptual underpinnings of support for the EP, we now turn to discussing the constraints and incentives for citizens to express their approval of the EP followed by an overview of research assessing cognitive predispositions and how citizens make sense of the EP.

Stage II: Citizens' Rational Calculations of Costs and Benefits

The greatest share of studies taking external causes, constraints or incentives into account looks at political participation in terms of elections, the causes and developments of demonstrations or protest movements, or the readiness to pay taxes or serve one's time in the army (Schmidtke and Schneider, 2012: 234; also Teorell et al., 2007). In the EU context, we connect this to the electoral behaviour in EP elections and the reasons to vote/abstain. Especially in the context of the EU crisis, we relate it to the rise of anti-austerity movements and Eurosceptic parties, or the politicisation of Europe more broadly (e.g., Della Porta et al., 2009; Della Porta and Parks, 2017; De Wilde et al., 2016; Koopmans, 2007; Kriesi and Grande, 2015; Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Schmitt and Toygür, 2016; Serricchio et al., 2013).

EP elections have for a long time now been described as second order elections in contrast to first order elections which 'decide who is in power and what policies are pursued' (Schmitt 2005: 651). Accordingly, participation is expected to be lower than in first order elections such as elections to the national parliament. In addition, voters feel less need to vote strategically and therefore, large parties, as research suggests, gain less votes in second order elections than in first order ones; and smaller parties have greater chances (Hix and Marsh, 2007, 2011; Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Schmitt, 2005; Schmitt and Toygür, 2016). Thus, the incentives to go and cast a ballot are found to be much lower in second order elections. In itself, however, this is not deemed to be a sign of lacking legitimacy (Blondel et al., 1998; Schmitt and Mannheimer, 1991; Schmitt and Van der Eijk, 2003).

Aside from these more general aspects that can be applied to other second order elections, too (e.g., German regional level elections), there are some characteristics genuinely European about second order EP elections which seem to dampen incentives for citizens to cast their ballot: Europe is a very unpopular topic for party contestation. Especially mainstream parties are in fact usually more supportive of European integration than their constituencies (Hellström, 2008; Mattila and Raunio, 2012; also Vasilopoulou and Gattermann, 2013). The discussion of Europe in public could potentially contribute to widening the gap to their voters (De Vries and Edwards, 2009; Schüttemeyer, 2009). Studies have, for example, shown that citizens express their dissatisfaction with the usually more pro-European attitude of mainstream parties in abstaining (Clark and Rohrschneider, 2009; Hobolt et al., 2009), thereby contributing to an undermining of the EP's authority more passively.

In addition, one of the main characteristics of EP elections is that national politics usually feature more prominently on campaigning agendas than Europe itself (e.g., Spoon, 2012). Therefore, it is mostly smaller parties at the extreme ends of the political spectrum that represent explicit, usually Eurosceptic stances (Hobolt and De Vries, 2015; Spoon, 2012). With growing Euroscepticism, however, scholars have also found evidence that EU topics have been politicised and consequently featured more prominently on campaigning agendas

in the run-up to EP elections (Adam and Maier, 2011; Schuck et al., 2011). Regarding voters' behaviour, then, studies suggest that indecisive voters are more likely to be motivated by EU issues instead of purely national ones (Clark, 2014).

Relating to political contestation over Europe, the crisis is found to be a major stimulus for contestation and public protest over Europe and has nourished the rise of Eurosceptic parties winning votes of many citizens in European, but also in national elections (De Vries and Hobolt, 2012; Hobolt and De Vries, 2016). Some Eurosceptic parties were born out of social movements, as for example Podemos in Spain (Tormey and Feenstra, 2015); existing ones usually grew in strength such as the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), the Finns Party or the National Front in France. This has concerned both extreme ends of the political spectrum (Hartleb, 2015). In some countries, the crisis has provided a window of opportunity to establish a Eurosceptic party, as for example the Alternative for Germany (Berbuir et al., 2015).

Anti-EU protest has mobilized especially in countries hit hardest by the European crisis and consequently being affected by strictest austerity measures, such as Spain and Greece (Vasilopoulou et al., 2014; Lane, 2012). These protests are a strong expression of the withdrawal of legitimacy of European politics. They may also be seen as a failure of established parties to provide convincing policy alternatives regarding the EU. In this respect, Kielmansegg describes European elections as ritual of ideological denomination – either pro or anti EU, without providing specific policy choices (Kielmansegg, 2009). On this basis, protest movements like the Five Stars Movement in Italy have shaken the established political system quite considerably, opening up new spaces in historically developed patterns of interest representation (Conti and Memoli, 2015; Errejon and Mouffe, 2016; Natale, 2014). The constraining dissensus (Hooghe and Marks, 2009), thus, is no longer expressed only in negative attitudes or electoral results. It is effectively channelled through, for example, movements that, initially occurring as rather unorganized protests and demonstrations in the streets, have developed into serious challengers of established political parties and the European project as such.

Stage I: Cognitive Predispositions of Rational Citizens

Regarding cognitive predispositions of citizens, a rich discussion in public opinion research has looked at psychological processes and mechanisms underlying the opinionation process. The dominating concepts in communication studies to approach this process focus on the agenda-setting, priming or framing effects of media (Blumler, 2015; Chong and Druckman, 2007; Scheufele, 2000; Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007) – all concentrating on the same opinion-building process, but emphasising different aspects of it. Priming theory is regarded an adjunct of agenda-setting theory (Blumer, 2015: 427); it posits that the media prime their audience by making certain issues salient on the agenda that then become the reference of citizens' evaluation, for example the past records of parties. Framing certainly is the most developed, 'more elaborate and potent than the others' (Blumler, 2015: 428). The underlying psychological mechanisms may be perceived to be the same for the cognitive processing of information in all these models (Scheufele, 1999: 116). Overall, the different approaches are usually not seen as mutually exclusive but complementary or even building on each other (McCombs et al., 1997; Perse, 2008; Scheufele, 1999).

Ultimately, the question is how external information and the information in the individual belief system are connected, or how the mind processes incoming information. In essence, it is this discussion which is mirrored in the first stage of decision-making of PH theory: Hwang et al. (2007: 41/42) identify five factors discussed in the literature describing the processing of external stimuli: Availability, applicability, activation, accessibility and usability. *Availability* relates to existing frames that have developed already (Higgins, 1996; Tversky and Kahneman, 1973). The term *applicability* describes how well incoming information fit with the existing (Bruner, 1957; Higgins, 1996). *Activation* means that relevant existing frames are activated by the incoming stimulus (Anderson, 1983; Price and Tewksbury, 1997); *accessibility* implies that activated frames may become more accessible for later evaluations. The *usability*, eventually, denotes the fact that the degree to which the activated frames are usable moderates how influential the incoming message may become (Higgins, 1996; Higgins and Brendl, 1995; Price and Tewksbury, 1997).

Accordingly, agenda-setting, priming and framing effects are assumed to emphasise different aspects of stimulation from the outside: While agenda-setting and priming focus on what citizens think in the first place, framing concentrates on what citizens think about the issue in question (e.g., Entman, 1993). Different stimuli, then, can change the accessibility, the importance of frames or the contents of frames (Chong and Druckman, 2007; Lecheler and De Vreese, 2012; Nelson et al., 1997; Slothuus, 2008). In sum, evaluations are formed in interplay of the (1) information received and the (2) predispositions of receivers in a (3) certain information environment which we have discussed in the preceding chapter (Zaller, 1992: 6; also De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2016). Attitudes, in sum, 'should properly refer to a range of potential evaluative expressions, tied to a foundation of beliefs, emotional responses, and past behavioral episodes that combine in varying strengths to determine the precise attitude expressed at any given time' (Nelson et al., 1997: 237; also Zaller, 1992).

Relating to the EP in particular, we have discussed earlier how some features make the EU a rather special political context given its second-order nature expressed in low public salience compared to domestic politics. First, citizens are usually less informed about international politics and foreign policy than about domestic issues. In the same vein, also European politics have been found to be too distant from citizens' daily lives (Anderson, 1998; De Vries et al., 2011; Follesdal and Hix, 2006; Karp et al., 2003) which is one important aspect of the EU's democratic deficit. As a result, citizens do not understand the EU and have problems to attribute responsibilities (Hobolt and De Vries, 2016; Hobolt and Tilley, 2014).

Second and as a result of this lack of knowledge, domestic attitudes have been found to exert a major influence on citizens' evaluations of, e.g., the EU as a whole (Armingeon and Ceka, 2014) or the satisfaction with democracy at the EU level (Boomgaarden, 2016; Desmet et al., 2012; Hobolt, 2012). Findings are corroborated by Hartevelde et al. (2013) who state that support for the EU is mainly due to reasons distinct from the Union itself (i.e., national politics). In his seminal contribution, Anderson (1998: 291; also Kritzinger, 2003) therefore, concludes that 'citizens ... resort to proxies derived from domestic political reality to comprehend and form opinions about [European integration]'. He further argues that this is

mainly due to the fact that EU topics lack salience, and therefore, stand back behind more pressing issues; opinions are not assumed to be irrational or incoherent, but guided by experiences in the national context.

The employment of shortcuts and proxies is assumed a basic mechanism of cognitive processing (e.g., Nelson et al. 1997); it is also part of our overarching theoretical framework within the first stage of decision-making (Mintz and DeRouen, 2010). However, in contrast to providing a lens through which EU politics is judged because of a lack of knowledge, national heuristics can also serve as benchmarks in the sense that especially educated citizens distinguish between the two levels and, for example, evaluate the EU against the standards set by their national government (Sánchez Cuenca, 2000; also Armingeon and Ceka, 2014; Desmet et al., 2012). This is the case with politically aware and informed citizens who may then, for example, feel that their government is functioning well whereas the EU's democracy does not work properly or does not perform to their expectations (Karp et al., 2003; Kuhn and Stoeckel, 2014; Rohrschneider and Loveless, 2010).

Other factors influencing support of the EU are found in personal characteristics, such as education, income, occupation, and values. Better educated and wealthier citizens for example are found to be able to better adapt to the liberalisation of the common market in the sense that they are able to compete also on a larger scale and thus, are less afraid of liberalisation. Studies have also found that utilitarian explanations for EU support, hence rational cost and benefit calculations, have gained in importance during the crisis (Braun and Tausenpfund, 2014) confirming the basic hypothesis that the more citizens may gain from EU integration, the more supportive they will be (Hobolt and De Vries, 2016: 22.9). Connecting to this, research has also shown that EU countries hit hardest by the crisis experienced the sharpest drop in trust in the EU (Dotti Sani and Magistro, 2016; Roth et al., 2013) – thus, the incentive to take it to the streets seems to lie in citizens' dissatisfaction and the perceived unfair treatment they receive by political elites.

Furthermore, decline in trust in the EP is related to citizens' social status. In this respect, Dotti Sani and Magistro conclude that '[t]he tightening of the link between social and

political inequalities is especially preoccupying considering the importance of trust in institutions for citizens to actively participate in society, voice their needs and demand their place at the table' (Dotti Sani and Magistro, 2016: 246). Thus, citizens do not feel that they benefit anymore and lose trust in the political regime by which their daily lives are affected.

Mirroring this, research suggests that individuals with post-materialistic values emphasising intellectual fulfilment, belonging and self-actualisation as opposed to materialistic values like economic and physical security are more supportive of EU integration. Research on these influences, however, seems inconclusive (Gabel, 1998; Hobolt and De Vries, 2016). Identity-related aspects, then, are found helpful explanations of Euroscepticism: Eurosceptic individuals seem to be more adverse towards other cultures, immigrants and minority groups (De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2005; Hobolt et al., 2011); they also seem to be more nationalist (Hooghe and Marks, 2004, 2005).

In conclusion (see Table 1 for an overview), citizens' support for parliament is central because it is the central institution of democracy in which elected representatives feed in preferences of citizens into decision-making. However, EP elections do not corroborate support; support for EU institutions is found to be built on support for general values or principles rather than the actual institution or its work. Incentives to vote in EP elections are found low which is expressed in low voter turnout, too. Regarding other behavioural aspects, the crisis is found a major incentive to protest against EU politics which has also empowered Eurosceptic parties at the EU and the national level. The remoteness of the EU makes it difficult to attribute responsibility or to identify with it. Due to this lacking link, the national context serves as a proxy in evaluations of the EP, but may also be a benchmark for more educated citizens. The crisis has brought utilitarian considerations to the fore while other factors considered in analyses also relate to identity or values.

Table 1: Overview of Most Important Empirical Findings Regarding the Greater Context and Two Stages of Decision-Making

	MEPs	Journalists	Citizens
Greater Context: Functions	- EP core institution of representative democracy at EU level - EP = Working /Controlling Parliament with greater emphasis of constitutional/governments-oriented functions - Empowerment of EP based on normative claims concerning the EU's democratic deficit and the EP's potential to alleviate it; also: historical windows of opportunity + EP actively seeking power	- Media = interface; diffusers of information about real life events, therefore unpredictable and volatile agenda; also watchdog highlighting problems; also advocate of political elites or mirror of public opinion - Have become more commercially-oriented but also autonomous/independent from politics over time; mediatisation forced political institutions to adapt - Differences between political/journalistic cultures (inclusiveness, parallelism, professionalism, legal framework)	- Citizens' support central for parliament as representative of citizens, much like elections - Empirical measure of legitimacy has to be based on diffuse and specific support - EP as a single institution more connected to specific support conceptually BUT due to lack of knowledge about EP, citizens resort to general attitudes towards fundamental principles which they have learned about in the national context
Stage II: Institutional/ Organisational Constraints and Incentives	- MEPs as agents of citizens; seeking policies, office or votes - Dependence on developments at national level; rather invisible outside elections - Ideological rather than national cleavage: great cohesiveness of PPGs despite lack of whip - Supranational institutions more often cooperating; opposition against Councils; unclear relationship with NPs	- Hierarchies have to be respected - Need of access to sources; power balance between journalists and politicians in ('tango') - Editorial line as established path that needs to be followed; Satisfy audience to remain credible and legitimate source - Need of timely delivery of competitive, distinct news product	- Low incentives to vote in EP elections due to second-order nature and very limited offer of policy choices by parties - Consequences of national austerity policies resulting from financial crisis as incentive for protest against EU - Success of social movements and extreme populist parties breaking up established patterns of representation
Stage I: Cognitive Constraints and Incentives	- No adaptation of attitudes during work in EP → no socialisation effect - Tendency towards representing a European, not a national constituency - Seniority and experience decisive - Individual beliefs of how much influence one has decisive for motivation to get involved	- Cross-validation of perceptions with peers (pack journalism) - Preservation of own predispositions; predispositions as coping mechanism - News values as a benchmark for journalists which must, however, also be seen as a product of journalists' perceptions of the story rather than ex-ante given characteristics of a news item	- Remoteness of EU difficult for citizens (difficulties to identify with it or attribute responsibility) - National context of major importance (proxy to bridge lack of knowledge, benchmark against which EP is evaluated) - Crisis influence: greater importance of utilitarian considerations - Other factors: identity-related factors, values, income, occupation, education

3.3 A Plausible Approach for the Study of EP Legitimation?

The current chapter is designed to introduce the analytical background of the thesis. For this purpose, we have discussed the PH approach and complemented it with HI; this was done to enable us to more effectively reflect on the institutional structures which rational actors attempt to maintain while operating within them. It was also done to implement the notion of contingency into our approach since it is an essential part of communication studies. Using a PH-HI approach, we argued, would allow us to create a framework inclusive and flexible enough to integrate discussions of three different strands under one theoretical roof. Since the theoretical model as such is content-free we discussed different strands of the literature dealing with actors in our three different environments (EP, journalists, and citizens), their behaviour, and the constraints and incentives they encounter in their attempts to maintain or withdraw legitimacy. In sum, we have discussed theoretical and empirical aspects which will, in the following, be integrated to serve as an overall analytical background for the thesis.

For that purpose, we connect empirical findings with the analytical model. Overall, we believe that the discussions can fruitfully enhance each other in some aspects: By abstracting these aspects from one strand to implement them into another, we ultimately create an overall framework for the study of parliamentary communication and its effects. Concluding, we connect back more explicitly to the research questions posed in this thesis and highlight limitations in the applicability of the PH-HI approach.

3.3.1 Drawing Results Together

In the following, we draw results together in a summary for each environment regarding the greater context and stages of decision-making. This summary (see also Table 1) serves as the basis for sketching our integrated framework in the next chapter and draws on chapter 2 as well to create a comprehensive framework for the study of EP legitimation.

European Parliamentarians

Concerning the greater context, the EP is a political institution and in that respect is part of the political regime defining the rules of the game in the EU's societies (North 1990). As we

have elaborated extensively, its greater purpose is to represent the interests of EU citizens and connect them with EU policy-making. As such, the EP is found to have exploited the treaties and succeeded in empowering itself over time. This was nurtured by the discussion of the EU's democratic deficit: Political elites could not reject the EP's claim for power without questioning the very democratic values and norms in which their own power was grounded. While principally opposing a stronger EP, EU actors did not exhibit stable policy preferences over time, which, in turn, opened up windows of opportunity for the EP. Expectations directed towards MEPs originate in parliamentary functions. Such are of constitutional (at the national level: government-oriented) or normative (oriented towards citizens) nature. In sum, for the purposes of our research, expectations directed towards MEPs seem to be mainly political.³

With regard to the second stage of decision-making, actors operate at different levels while, according to our PH-HI approach, we start from the individual MEP and perceive party groups or the EP as a whole as a collective actor that reaches decisions in different modes (i.e. majority voting). In the balance of power between EU institutions today, the EP is in most policy areas an equal partner to member states represented in the Council while ties with the Commission seem to have become stronger not least due to the introduction of the Spitzenkandidaten procedure. However, while one intention of empowering the EP was also to compensate for the loss of competencies of NPs, the democratic deficit remains which brought the role of NPs back on the agenda questioning the EP as main source of legitimacy. Within the EP, European party groups as well as national parties are found to exert influence regarding constraints of MEPs. The EP as a working environment seems to have become more attractive due to its increased power and, aware of these powers, MEPs seem to be even more cohesive in their party groups, even in the absence of formal party discipline.

Concerning cognitive constraints (first stage of decision-making), it seems that individual MEPs are not influenced by the EP as a working environment in the sense that they would

³ Of course, economic expectations play a role, too, regarding the efficient and rightful use of tax money to pay parliamentarians and their expenses, for example. However, the expectation that tax money should be spent carefully is part of the moral expectations that should be fulfilled to foster the political trustworthiness that needs to be at the basis of the principal-agent relationship (e.g., Kelso, 2009).

grow more Europhile. However, they seem to perceive their constituency rather as a European than a national one. Thus, their cognitive biases do not seem to make them discard alternatives serving all Europeans for the sake of national ones. Yet, such alternatives do not necessarily have to further the integration process since MEPs do not grow more Europhile over time. MEPs may have different career goals and, for example, want to gain political experience for a political career at the national level. Overall, the engagement of MEPs is assumed to be motivated by ambition in that she seeks to influence policies, seeks office or re-election – or at a more abstract level, tries to exert influence on the outcome or maintain or enhance her own power. In this respect, the agenda of a parliament is regarded as rather defined and ritualised but at the same time very complex and almost anachronistic (Marschall, 2009) – the working procedures, while they can be influenced by real life events, are thus quite inert and predictable. In sum, the ambition of an MEP shapes her behavioural patterns or ‘strategies conditioned by the institutional framework in which parliamentarians operate’ (Strom, 1997: 157).

Journalists

Concerning the greater context, journalists connect political elites and citizens on a larger scale so that they diffuse information about politics and mirror public opinion; they provide factual information and their opinion on it and in doing so, function as a critical observer of societal developments. They are a political institution in the sense that without them, mass democracies could not function. But they are also economic enterprises on a market on which they strive for survival. The economic dimension has become more important over time in a process of commercialisation which has, however, also made journalists more independent from politicians. Moreover, the importance of the media has forced political institutions to adapt their communication to the media logic as an integral part of political work. In sum, expectations directed towards journalists seem to be political and economic.

Regarding the second stage of decision-making, journalists are exposed to market pressures which demand a timely delivery of a distinct and competitive news product. For that purpose, journalists need to secure access to relevant sources, i.e., politicians, with whom they are found to have a symbiotic relationship described as a form of dance in which either

or may do the leading. To remain a credible competitor, journalists need to stick to the editorial line as, in the terminology of HI, an established path on which they have received positive feedback: Their audience relies on the credibility and legitimacy of the news product and since the audience ultimately decides over the success of a news product, its approval is essential. The editorial line is guarded by the editor who is a decision-maker with more stakes in the eventual outcome. The approval of the editor, thus, is a constraint that lower ranked reporters have to consider. Therefore, a tabloid reporter, for example, will not bother herself with suggesting an awful lot of political news items to the editor since, broadly speaking, there is only so much space for such news in tabloid papers.

Concerning the first stage of decision-making, journalists are situated in a highly uncertain environment: Under time pressure, they have to decide what news is worthy of being considered and invested in, conscious of the fact that they may influence public opinion with what they choose to cover. Mirroring the contingency of historical development as described in HI, their agenda is extremely fluid and needs to be flexible: It covers what is happening in the world and accordingly, needs to be adapted and re-assessed continuously. In the overwhelming universe of possible news items, journalists are found to resort to their own predispositions in their selection process. For this reason, predispositions can be assumed to function as a coping mechanism but also mirror journalists' own opinions and interests. In addition, because of the uncertainty in anticipating the approval of a news decision by the public, journalists cross-validate their own perceptions with their peers and thereby create a shared reality often resulting in quite homogeneous news. This 'pack-journalism' is also found to be a major aspect of media power: The more homogenous, the more weight the media have.

Learning from the discussion of legislative studies, we may perceive journalists as ambitious and striving for maintaining or enhancing their power in the sense that they want to influence the outcome – the news product, they want to keep their job or get promoted. In the case of news organisations, organizationally embedded expectations provide incentives and constraints concerning media's political *and* economic functions. In line with this insight,

journalists' ambition is here defined as political *and/or* economic self-enhancement. To fulfil expectations directed towards them, journalists develop behavioural routines or roles in the respective beat in which they work, in a striving for independence, expanding access to relevant sources, delivering interesting news, etc. They are not elected agents of citizens and news is most often not studied as a strategic message from an individual journalist – unlike political actors' communication. Still, regarding legitimation, also journalists have to earn trust to maintain their own legitimacy in the society they are part of and to survive in competition with other news organisations. Therefore, they will – in line with the journalistic standards in the respective media system – stick to certain roles to corroborate their own trustworthiness.

Learning from the discussion of journalism studies, the high cohesiveness of party groups in the EP in the absence of party whips may be interpreted as a sort of 'pack-parliamentarism': MEPs' shared reality is expressed in the membership in an ideologically cohesive group. On the one hand, while the environment of MEPs as such must be regarded less uncertain with its defined and predictable procedures, MEPs like journalists may lose their seat as a result of illegitimate behaviour and therefore, a party (group) serves as cognitive reference of a shared reality. On the other hand, MEPs together have more power in terms of votes than each one individually. This is corroborated by the fact that enhanced competencies of the EP have led to higher cohesiveness of party groups: Since there is more at stake, it pays off to be cohesive in terms of policy influence. In that respect, working in structures compatible with own predispositions also reduces adaptation costs and can increase influence, e.g., in parties where like-minded political actors cooperate (Müller, 2000).

Citizens

Regarding the greater context, citizens' support for the EP is fundamental since the parliament represents their interests; it is the core institution of representative democracy and continuously low support would undermine its legitimacy and the legitimacy of the democratic system. Support for an individual institution should conceptually be grounded in more utilitarian considerations regarding the performance of this institution (specific support). However, the remoteness of the EU as such seems to make people resort to what

they have learnt in the national context when evaluating the EP. Therefore, the evaluation of the EP has been found to be nurtured by more diffuse considerations of support grounded in beliefs in a principle or an idea, for example representative democracy as such.

Empirical findings for the second stage of decision-making reveal the low incentives for citizens to vote in EP elections, also due to the very limited offer of policy choices of political parties. However, it is also found that politically interested citizens vote regardless of the second-order nature of EP elections. Sparked by dissatisfaction with measures implemented during the financial crisis of the EU, moreover, citizens have become more sceptic about the EU and empowered anti-EU populist parties that corrode the legitimacy of the EP as an institution of the EU regime. Dissatisfaction with (national) EU policies is also expressed in sometimes violent protest, usually in countries hit hardest by austerity measures such as Greece or Spain.

With regard to the first stage of decision-making, the study of public opinion has produced detailed accounts of the cognitive mechanisms of information processing. One of the most important predispositions influencing how information is evaluated is the awareness of an issue in terms of interest or knowledge since this can make the mind more or less independent from suggested evaluations communicated in incoming information (Anderson, 1998; Zaller, 1992). Regarding the remoteness of the EU, however, citizens have found it difficult to attribute responsibility to identify with it. Therefore, the national context has been suggested to be a crucial standard against which the EU is evaluated or, usually in case of lacking knowledge, as a means to bridge gaps.

Learning from legislative or journalism studies seems somewhat difficult for this environment since it follows a different functional logic. Citizens as such are not part of an institution laying out the rules of the game or an organisation competing on a market; they do not strive towards a certain output or aim at reaching a certain goal embedded in hierarchies surrounding them. They are the society which is 'playing' the game, so to say, for whom rules are defined so that citizens can rule themselves in a democracy. Citizens ultimately maintain or withdraw the legitimacy of a democratic political system. Democratic

systems depend on their citizens to participate in politics – be it in elections or in expressing their opinions and attitudes towards politics so that representatives know about the citizens' interests that should be reflected in policies. They are, therefore, found to be motivated by political interest or dissatisfaction rather than ambition to produce a certain output which is achieved by procedures embedded in organisational structures. Against this background we now proceed to sketching an integrated framework for the study of the EP legitimisation process in the EU's mass democracies.

3.3.2 Sketching an Integrated Framework for the Study of EP Legitimation

In the following, we identify, in line with PH theory, relevant dimensions that decision-makers take into account during the first stage of the decision-making process. To recall, we have earlier defined dimensions as 'organising theme[s]' (Brulé, 2008: 268) or a cluster of variables pertaining to a certain topic, i.e., an economic dimension or a military dimension. Dimensions can have different degrees of salience. If an alternative fails to meet the expectations in a highly salient dimension, it may be discarded altogether because, due to its salience, this failure cannot be compensated in a less salient dimension (Mintz and Geva, 1997: 85-86).

We look at the legitimisation process of the EP, and not at policy decisions. In the original PH approach, the decision for certain policies as outcomes may be influenced by financial or political considerations. For the greater purpose of legitimacy as 'outcome' of the decision, however, we believe that, since legitimacy is a social phenomenon and is granted by (groups of) actors, we need to look at these actors in terms of dimensions. Thus, while these dimensions considered during the first stage relate to the relevant actors that may grant legitimacy or to the actors that are evaluated with regard to the legitimacy of their behaviour, alternatives calculated in the second stage are as contingent as perceptions of legitimacy themselves.

The relevant *dimensions* to consider for *MEPs* concern their striving for maintaining or enhancing the own position in terms of power. This means they have to fulfil certain expectations that relevant reference actors, who are in the position to constrain them, may

have. Such actors are the *constituency* whose votes they need to win, the *national party* who nominates them for elections, the *European party* group which may offer a relevant post and other institutions in the EU with which the EP may want to co-operate. Lastly, in our mediatised democracies, *media* are an integral and crucial reference actor for politicians in general.

The relevant *dimensions* to consider for *journalists* concern their ambition to maintain or enhance their own position in terms of power. This means they have to fulfil expectations of their *editors* in order to keep their job or get promoted, they have to satisfy their *sources* to make sure they get timely and relevant information; they have to anticipate their *audience's* interests and they have to maintain certain standards of legitimacy to, last but not least, deliver a distinct news product in competition with their *peers*.

The relevant *dimensions* which *citizens* take into account when making their decision to evaluate the EP in one way or the other seem to first and foremost lie in the *national context* – for this reason, it is relevant for them, what national politicians do and how national institutions perform. The *supranational EU level* seems very remote from their everyday life but has started to become more relevant with the financial crisis – even if mostly in a negative way. The European dimension – at the European and national level – has grown in salience but seems to mainly cause dissatisfaction motivating citizens to protest either in the streets or via their vote. Last but not least, also the legitimacy of the *press* may be evaluated by citizens, resulting in their approval or rejection of a certain news product, which has been found to be moderated by political interest or education. In addition, citizens organising themselves in protest movements, for example, need media visibility in order to give their own demands and claims more weight.

In conclusion, all three environments play an equally important role and fulfil distinct tasks in the continuous democratic process of legitimation, eventually influencing each other: MEPs communicate, journalists diffuse (their account of) that information, and citizens are influenced by it; journalists mirror (their account of) public opinion in their reporting and in doing that, communicate citizens' interests back to political elites. They serve as a reference

point also for MEPs who may prove their responsiveness by taking up citizens' interests mediated by the mass media. In general, as we have argued earlier, we perceive the process of legitimisation as communication for the purpose of acquiring, maintaining or withdrawing legitimacy. In this respect, McNair (2011: 6), for example, describes political communication as a process with political actors, media, and citizens engaging in a continuous reciprocal process communicating with each other via different means. Incorporating our results into this greater conceptualisation of political communication, then, yields an overarching analytical framework for the study of the EP legitimisation process.

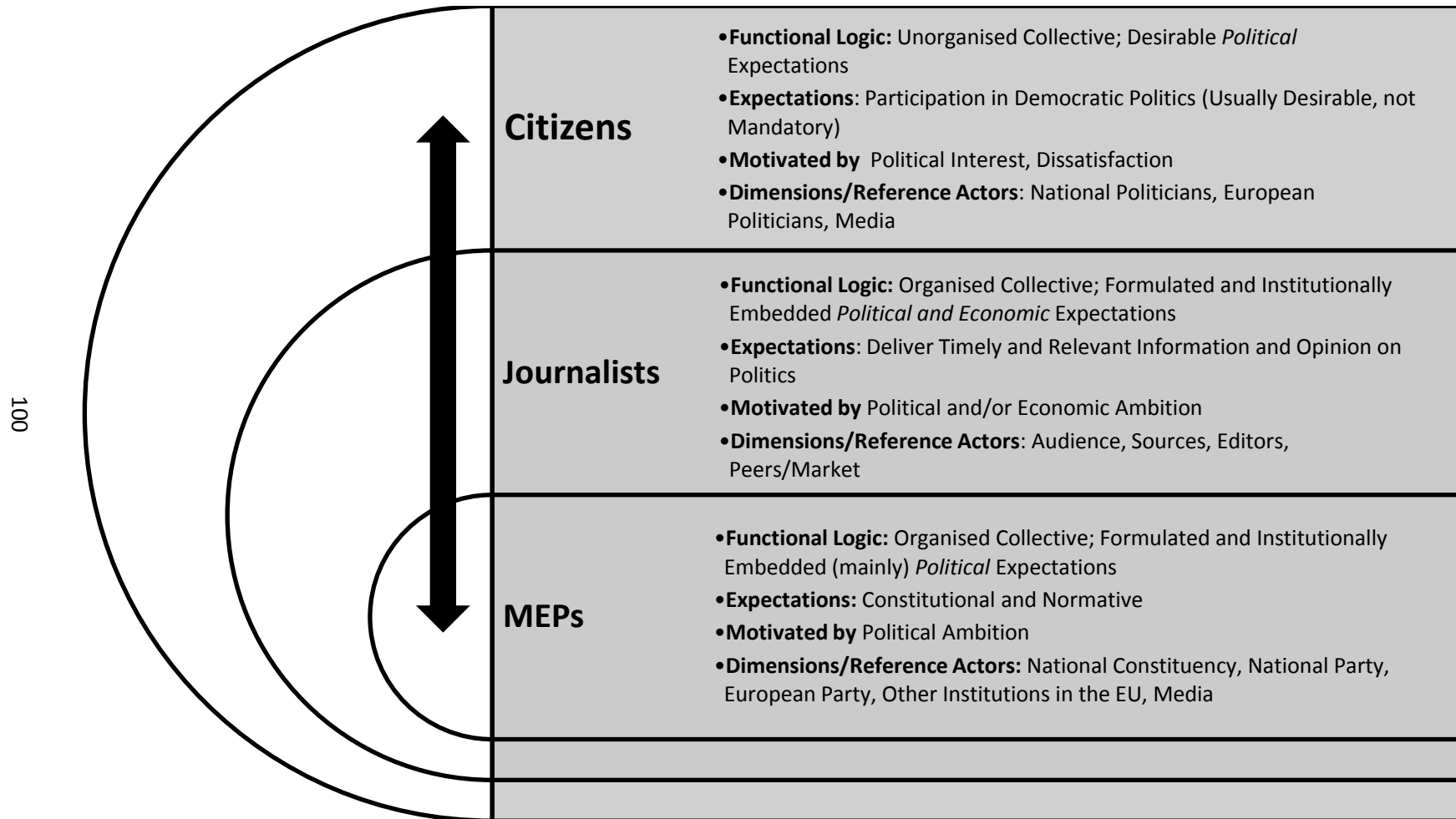
The most important aspects for each environment concern the functional logic since we have found differences between organised structures like a parliament or a news organisation that are designed to produce a certain outcome (e.g., law or a news product) and unorganised structures such as the citizens who – being organised in a political entity – are usually not forced to participate in democratic processes and cannot be fired or unelected. The functional logic, thus, is a result of the expectations that have been embedded in organisational meso structures. Since it is ultimately the behaviour of actors that is deemed legitimate or not, we stress the motivation of actors to behave in one way or the other – an aspect that is not explicitly reflected in the original PH approach. Last but not least, the above discussed dimensions in the form of reference actors play an important role in deciding about the viability of alternatives (see Figure 4).

The reciprocity of the process and mutual influences are mirrored in identified dimensions: MEPs have to consider the media and their constituency, journalists their audience and their sources; citizens, eventually, may judge European parliamentarians while research suggests that the national context is more important. Citizens may also evaluate the media as source of information as legitimate or not. In sum, however, all dimensions may eventually increase or hamper the legitimacy of MEPs or journalists, or may motivate citizens to express their opinion about European politics in one way or the other. Therefore, all dimensions play an equally important role when considering the bigger picture.

An MEP may decide to support a certain policy, run for a certain office, decide to submit a parliamentary question or hold a speech in a parliamentary debate – all against the background of legitimately fulfilling the duties of her office by being a trustworthy representative, considering possible repercussions of relevant actors. A journalist may cover an issue, conduct an interview, do some more research on a topic to give a broader picture, portray a certain politician in one way or the other – all against the background of remaining a credible competitor and fulfilling the expectations directed towards media. Citizens, then, as an un-organised collective constituting society, may judge the legitimacy of politics or journalists, form an opinion, cast a ballot, or even decide to take it to the streets to express their dissatisfaction. In this respect, citizens may become active to withdraw legitimacy while MEPs and journalists are actively pursuing legitimacy through their behaviour.

In sum, following our adapted PH-HI approach, the decisions of MEPs, journalists, or citizens to behave in one way or the other are ultimately shaped by their cognitive predispositions, their anticipation of costs and benefits, and in a unique situation in time – following the logic of HI stressing the contingency of reality. The hierarchy of dimensions may, therefore, differ from one point in time to the other putting different reference groups on a higher or lower ranking regarding their importance for decision-making. The hierarchy of these dimensions may, e.g., depend on how far away EP or domestic elections are, what has happened on that day, or how salient a certain policy topic is in public opinion at the moment – and one dimension may then be so salient that alternatives may be discarded during the first stage if they do not satisfy expectations there. As we have explained in chapter 3.1, it is especially this non-compensatory feature by which PH theory is distinguished from rational choice alone in which the individual would rank dimensions equally calculating the costs and benefits of *all* existing alternatives. Also reconnecting to the logic of HI, it is, therefore, important to take different points in time into account when assessing the dynamic process of the EP's legitimation.

Figure 4: An Integrated Framework for the Study of EP Legitimation



We understand the analytical framework developed in this chapter also as a contribution to the discussion of how political communication as such may be theorised taking the different disciplines which it touches upon into account. Reconnecting to the research questions posed in this thesis (see Figure 1 for an overview), it is apparent that we do not use the framework as a whole for embedding the thesis: In the empirical analyses to come, we look at how MEPs' communication efforts affect journalists and, as a result, coverage of the EP (RQ2). Furthermore, confirming again what we have discussed in chapter 2.2, the national context plays a fundamental role in the legitimisation process of the EP: Citizens evaluate the EP using national standards; MEPs as elected representatives have to consider their national constituency and national party. And due to this importance of the national context, also newsmakers in their anticipation of readership interest may find national politics or a national perspective on EU politics more newsworthy. The national benchmark, therefore, must be assumed to represent a fundamental aspect of the EP's legitimisation process and it is important to incorporate it in an analysis such as the one envisaged in this thesis. Enhancing the scope of our research, therefore, we include national parliaments in the analysis guided by RQ2. The remoteness of EU politics also underlines the relevance of looking at media contents in general (RQ1) and including an assessment of media effects (RQ3) – the influence of journalists on citizens – in the analysis since it is the media that bring politics home to citizens and influence their opinions about the democracy they live in.

We look at a process, in which causal relationships may be simultaneous. Thus, it may not be entirely clear in which direction causality works. For this reason, it is imperative to design our research in a way that enables us to make causal claims about the relationships of independent and dependent variables. In this respect, our regression models take the temporal dimension into account and connect variables in a way to ensure that the condition of temporal antecedence of the defined cause is fulfilled (e.g., Tacq, 2011). In the following, we reflect on the implications of using a PH-HI approach and the difficulties of implementing it entirely.

3.3.3 Implications of Using a Poliheuristic Historical Institutional Approach

Against the background of this overall framework, it seems plausible to use our PH-HI approach for the study of the EP's legitimation process. Originating in political science, PH theory is, perhaps not surprisingly, quite compatible with research in legislative studies concerning the two stages of decision-making. In journalism research, scholars have usually taken a more sociological stance starting from external formal and informal structures to study their impact on the behaviour of journalists. We have used the insights from this literature but incorporated it into the rational choice view, starting from the individual rational decision-maker and perceiving surrounding routines as constraints in the process of reaching a decision. Last but not least, public opinion research seems to focus to a great extent on the first stage of decision-making giving detailed account of cognitive processes explaining the impact of the EU's remoteness on opinions about EU institutions and politics.

However, it must be noted that data availability may pose constraints on empirical research that aims at implementing the approach: For a full application in empirical research, we would always have to include data on individual predispositions such as education, attitudes or gender, along with data on external constraints like the editorial line, the party affiliation, etc. Such data, however, may prove difficult to obtain since surveys with journalists, for example, are usually not conducted regularly or focus on a limited number of countries. Similarly, a survey is conducted with MEPs for some legislative terms; but at the national level, for example, a similar survey spanning MPs of EU member states' parliaments, for example, is, to the best of knowledge, not available.

A PH-HI approach still seems a plausible theoretical underpinning and data availability is a quite common constraint in academic research. As a proxy for individual predispositions, we may, for example, argue, that voluntarily selected external constraints may be seen as a mirror of internal predispositions or at least a proxy concerning what way the ambitious individual anticipates as viable for furthering her own goals. In this respect, one might assume that an MEP that is ideologically more leaning towards the left side of the spectrum will not become member of a right wing party. She would most probably also oppose that

her party becomes member of a party group in the EP that is too far away from her own perception of the party's stances. Similarly, a journalist greatly interested in covering politics would not aspire to make a career in tabloid journalism which is found to be more entertainment-oriented in comparison to broadsheets. Admittedly, however, that type of proxy becomes more unprecise for journalists due to different modes of decision-making (e.g., majorities in party-internal ballots vs. editor as ultimate authority deciding over outcome) and the stronger embeddedness of ideology in parties than in media outlets (e.g., Hallin and Mancini, 2004).

Still, following the PH logic such external constraints can be thought of as a once chosen, viable alternative which at some point in time maximised utilities – one that was not discarded in the first stage and that has, following the reasoning of HI, yielded positive feedback furthering the goals of an ambitious journalist or MEP. Based on that argument, we can use proxies that, at least roughly, may tell us about predispositions and attitudes of the decision-maker at an aggregate level. We may, for example, include variables in the analysis that tell us about party affiliation, the editorial line or the outlet and thereby implement the PH-HI logic indirectly. Against this background we now proceed to conceptual issues and look at the selection of cases and data sources as well as the retrieval, coding and processing of the data that form the empirical basis of this thesis.

4 Researching the Legitimation Process of the European Parliament

Having discussed the broader normative and analytical background of the thesis, we now turn to conceptual and methodological aspects. This concerns general approaches to empirically researching legitimation processes and, more specifically, how we designed the research of the EP's legitimation process as analysed in this thesis. This regards the selection of cases and data and the retrieval and coding of data. In sum, the chapter gives a detailed account of the newspaper content analysis which is the central data source for the empirical analyses to follow.

4.1 Different Approaches to the Empirical Study of Legitimacy

In principle, the expression or withdrawal of legitimacy can be observed from different angles. Discussing the legitimacy of the nation state, Schneider, Hurrelmann and Nullmeier (2007) analytically distinguish (1) the attitudinal dimension, (2) the behavioural dimension, and (3) the discursive dimension. All dimensions are interconnected with each other but focus on slightly different aspects. They are not interchangeable but rather complementary and built on different assumptions and preconditions. Thus, there is no 'best practice' of research (Schmidtke and Schneider, 2012: 229) but the particular methodological approaches have to be selected in line with the respective research questions formulated.

Focussing on the *attitudinal* dimension, '[a] regime's legitimacy is understood as a quantitatively measurable attribute of political orders and institutions, and it is operationalized as the aggregate of individual responses to pertinent questions in public opinion surveys' (Schneider et al., 2007: 128). Attitudes, here, are 'inferred from observable responses' (Eagly and Chaiken, 1998: 269) and are not per se observable phenomena. Approaching it from this angle has allowed drawing a complex image of normative foundations, structures and effects of citizens' beliefs in legitimacy (Booth and Seligson, 2009: 17/18). Scholars have collected cross-sectional and longitudinal data and helped to advance discussions about, e.g. global governance and its problems becoming evident, for example, in the EU's democratic deficit (Gabel and Palmer, 1995; Lubbers and Scheepers, 2010; Norris 1999). However, the approach was also criticised for not enabling us to infer about people's motives or strategies since the predefined questionnaires of surveys are somewhat insensitive to the context in which attitudes are formed. Moreover, 'we can describe support as an attitude by which a person orients himself to an object either favorably or unfavorably, positively or negatively. Such an attitude may be expressed in parallel action' (Easton, 1975: 436). Thus, attitudes actually become relevant and visible when they are expressed in activities. This is when they may contribute to the (de)legitimation of political authority in reality (Easton, 1965, 1975; Schmidtke and Schneider, 2012).

The attitudinal dimension seems to tell only part of the story. Focussing on the actual expression of these attitudes, scholars look at the *behavioural* dimension in terms of elections, protests or demonstrations (e.g., Della Porta and Parks, 2017; Schmitt and Toygür, 2016). Here, analyses usually focus on the non-compliance with political rules or non-participation in, e.g. elections, or protest movements as an expression of the withdrawal of legitimacy of a regime. Such actions represent the manifestations of predispositions that are measured in survey items. However, also here, motivations remain somewhat unclear since '[n]ot all compliance need reflect supportive sentiments; not all violations of rules need be non-supportive' (Easton, 1975: 454). After all, the same type of behaviour can have different meanings in different contexts and therefore, it seems difficult to determine if it expresses approval or the withdrawal of legitimacy. In this respect, an important question is, for example, what 'amount' or 'degree' of protest is needed in order to qualify it as a withdrawal of legitimacy or simply as an expression of diverging opinions (Schmidtke and Schneider, 2012).

Both dimensions, the attitudinal and the behavioural, seem to be limited by the fact that they cannot alone get at the motivations of actors. In addition, it is criticised that the role of elites in their pursuit of self-legitimation and the interactive relationship between elites and citizens in supporting regimes are considered too little. Tackling these limitations, a third dimension looks into the communicative contexts as the *discursive* dimension of legitimacy (e.g., De Wilde et al., 2011; Hurrelmann et al., 2009, 2012; Schneider et al., 2007). Attitudes and behaviour represent reactions to legitimation processes, and as such the outcomes of decision processes. Assessing the contents of legitimation *discourses*, as processes of producing, reproducing, challenging and modifying the normative standards of legitimacy (Schmidtke and Schneider, 2012: 228; more generally also Habermas, 1962) can help to understand underlying mechanisms, strategies and motivations, resulting, and at the same time being influenced by, attitudes and behaviour of citizens and elites alike. We therefore look at the discursive dimension which constitutes a link between attitudes and behaviour: While the empirical analysis conducted in this thesis connects discourse with attitudes only, the behavioural dimension is reflected upon as an overall background throughout the thesis

since it is citizens' behaviour that makes the weakness of the EP's link to its constituency apparent in, e.g., EP elections.

The remainder of this chapter gives an extensive overview of the framework and process of the collection of the data used for empirical analyses. Further methodological implications pertaining to regression analyses are introduced in the respective chapters. Here, we give a justification of the case selection, a description of the data collection and the coding process as well as an overview of how data is processed to describe inherent patterns.

4.2 Selection of Cases and Data Sources

Overall, the research design is based on a diverse case approach: The selection of cases is based on the 'primary objective [of] the achievement of maximum variance along relevant dimensions' (Seawright and Gerring, 2008: 300; also Lijphart, 1971). These relevant dimensions are firstly discussed with regard to the time frame on the one hand and the selection of countries and newspapers on the other.

4.2.1 Research Periods

Concerning the selection of research periods, one goal is to dovetail and enhance earlier research that focussed on EU coverage during EP election periods (e.g., De Vreese et al., 2006; Schuck et al., 2013). To select EP elections as a case study has several advantages. Firstly, elections are a means to express (dis-)satisfaction, and public discussion about the legitimacy of the EP is expected to be more intense here (e.g., Semetko et al., 2000: 130). To compare the elections of 2009 and 2014, then, is expected to show whether and how the discourse has changed within five years that have been marked by the financial crisis, an ever more heated discussion of the EU's legitimacy and the rise of Euroscepticism in many EU member states. Secondly, the prominent topic of elections promises a sufficiently high amount of analysable material. Eventually, because elections are a favoured period of analysis, other data is more likely to be available and combinable with coverage analyses, i.e. the EES.

However, focussing on elections only may strongly bias results, exactly because of the higher amount of data and the more intense discussion to be expected. To gain a more complete understanding of the EP's public portrayal, it seems essential to also look at routine periods. Yet, few studies look at routine periods and elections in comparison. Another goal, therefore, was to extend existing knowledge by comparing election times and routine periods as a way to control for the effects of the spotlighting that a special event brings.

In line with other EP election studies (e.g., Schulze, 2016; Strömbäck, et al. 2011), the time frame was set to cover the three weeks preceding and three weeks following the two most recent elections in 2009 and 2014. Elections in 2009 took part in week 23, in 2014 they were organised in week 21 (DE&FI: 7.6.2009 and 25.5.2014; UK: 4.6.2009 and 22.5.2014). Accordingly, routine periods were set to cover the intersection period since election dates were two weeks apart: To achieve maximum variance in the expected discourse by minimising the influence of the special event of elections, routine periods were set to span six weeks in the years exactly between elections (2011 & 2012). Figure 5 provides an overview of the periods that are included in the analysis.

Figure 5: Overview of Weeks Coded for Analysis

Week No.	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
2009					E ⁴			
2011								
2012								
2014			E					

Election Day in the UK is on Thursday whereas it is on Sunday in the other two cases; however, due to the specific EU regulations, results may only be published when the last polling station in any EU member state has closed (European Parliament – Information Office in the United Kingdom, 2017). Different dates of Elections Days are therefore not expected to lead to differences across countries. To maintain comparability between country samples, we always started coded weeks with Mondays.

⁴ E= Elections; In 2009, elections took place in the end of week 23 on 7.6.2009 (4.6.2009 in UK). In 2014, elections took place in the end of week 21 on 25.5.2014 (22.5.2014 in UK).

4.2.2 Countries

Considering the *selection of countries*, Finland, Germany and the United Kingdom are chosen for the following reasons. Focussing on EP news coverage, relevant dimensions in which diversity is to be achieved include (1) national parliamentary traditions that were found to be a key reference regarding EP coverage and attitudes (Gattermann, 2011, 2013; more generally: Anderson, 1998; Desmet et al., 2012). Since we want to explore the potential of the EP to legitimise EU politics – also in an explicit comparison to NPs, this dimension is central. Furthermore, (2) public opinion, as an indicator of the political climate in which journalists draw conclusions of newsworthiness, is deemed important. In this respect, the European crisis must be considered a strong influential factor which may be mirrored in changes of the party system in the EP as such, but also in national parliaments. Finally, (3) the different media systems of countries are deemed an influential factor regarding newspaper data as such. The three selected countries do show more or less considerable diversity in these dimensions and in considering them, we follow a recommendation by Gattermann (2011) who posits that ‘a typology of political communication systems might want to take political factors and political system dynamics into account in addition to media system characteristics when studying variation in EU news coverage’ (Gattermann, 2011: 249).

National Parliamentary Traditions and Scrutiny in EU Affairs

With regard to parliamentary traditions, we discussed earlier that the ideal types are usually described as working and debating parliaments (Steffani 1979). To recall, these two types are seen as two extremes of a continuum on which parliaments can be situated (Steffani, 1979: 97; also Marschall, 2005): Generally speaking, working parliaments emphasise committee work whereas debating parliaments set a strong emphasis on the plenary.

Finland – In this respect, the Finnish *Eduskunta* as the only unicameral parliament in the sample is categorised as a working parliament with strong rights concerning the access to information from the government (Raunio 2015; also Raunio and Wiberg 2008). Moreover, the ex-ante mandating procedure which is employed with regard to EU politics can effectively constrain the power of executive actors and makes the Finnish parliament one of

the strongest scrutinisers of all EU member states (e.g., Auel et al., 2015b). Committee meetings are held behind closed doors which has given it the reputation of being a 'Nordic Vatican' (Arter, 2012). However, this stands in sharp contrast to the parliament's self-perception of being one of the 'most open parliaments in the world' (Eduskunta, 2017) in which media representatives can move rather freely in parliament house to interview political actors on site.

Germany – Regarding its categorisation as either a working or debating parliament, the German *Bundestag* seems to be somewhat of a hybrid (Steffani, 1979) but is described as more of a working parliament emphasising committee work (e.g., Auel and Raunio, 2014a). In terms of scrutiny, the Bundestag has been empowered by judgments of the German Federal Constitutional Court during the crisis and is ascribed 'moderately strong' rights (Auel and Raunio, 2014a: 18): The German parliament cannot constrain executives by giving them mandates before negotiations at the EU level. But its opinions have to be taken into account; if results deviate from the Bundestag's line, governmental actors must justify themselves afterwards. The Bundestag is also found to make increased use of public scrutiny in the form of questions or debates during the EU crisis (Höing, 2015: 197).

United Kingdom – At the other extreme of the continuum, the British *House of Commons* is the textbook example of a debating parliament strongly stressing public dispute (Norton, 2012; Steffani, 1979). In EU matters, the British parliament cannot formally constrain executives: 'Coupled with the focus on responding to documents after they have been issued by EU institutions, the United Kingdom's parliamentary scrutiny processes are ... heavily weighted towards ensuring the post hoc accountability of government rather than towards constraining or influencing Ministers before Council negotiations' (Huff and Smith, 2015: 315; see also Auel and Raunio, 2015: 18). Debates on EU issues are usually held in non-permanent committees appointed to the discussion of this special EU issue rather than in the plenary to which it can be referred: Such debates do not attract a lot of attention and are found to be under-used even by parliament itself (Huff and Smith, 2015: 315).

Summing up, the Finnish Eduskunta and the British House of Commons can be perceived as the two ideal types in the sample with the German Bundestag ranging in the middle. This is also the case for EU scrutiny rights: The Eduskunta is very strong followed by the Bundestag and ranking last, the House of Commons. With regard to public legislative activities, the Finnish parliament is usually seen as the most closed of the three. German MPs also work more in committees but increasingly make use of public scrutiny. The British parliament, in that respect, seems most open but due to a lack of popular demand, uninterested in debating EU matters in public.

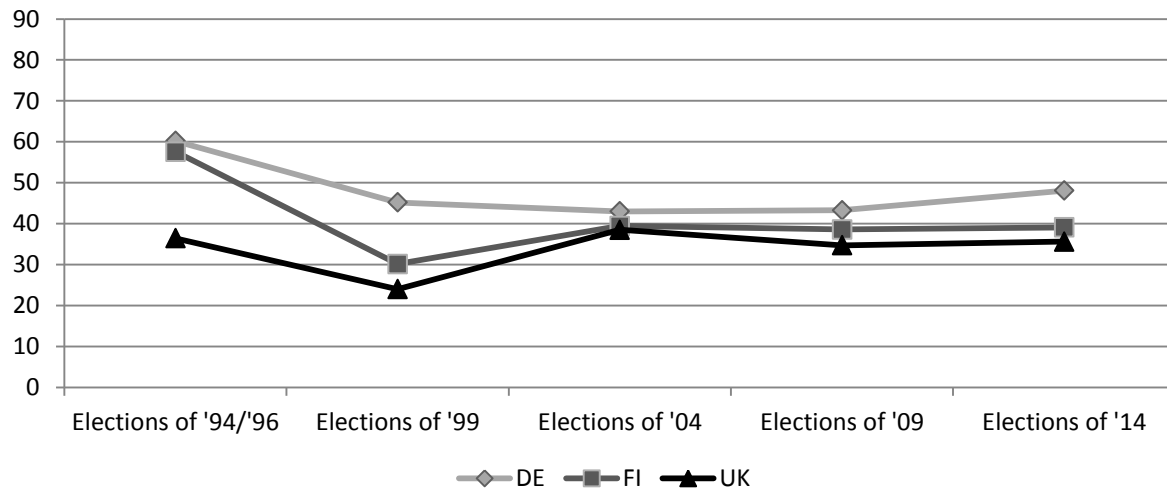
The Political Environment Regarding European Integration

The political environment is considered a crucial reference point when assessing the political climate in which newsmakers conclude about relevance or newsworthiness. It is here looked at in terms of public opinion about the EU and the representation of citizens' interest via parties. In this respect, a focus is laid on changes that have come about as a consequence of the financial crisis, i.e. the success or rise of Eurosceptic parties.

Finland – Finland joined the EU in 1995, together with Sweden and Austria, and accordingly, held its first EP elections in 1996. The Finnish attitude towards the EU is described as 'pragmatic and constructive ... [with a] strong conviction that a strong and efficient EU can best protect the rights and interests of smaller member states' (Raunio, 2016a: 400/401). In this respect, the Finnish public has become more concerned during the financial crisis and thus, creates more pressure on political elites. In comparison with the other two countries in the sample, Finland ranges at a middle position regarding the Eurobarometer (EB) question if the EU conjures up a positive image for its citizens (see Figure 8).

There is also a perceived gap between parties and their electorate concerning EU issues with parties usually being more pro-EU than the average citizen. Especially with general elections in 2011, the debate about how much interference Brussels may be granted became more contested than ever before. In these elections, the Eurosceptic Finns Party seems to have jumped into this gap: They shook the Finnish, broadly pro-European, party system when they won 39 of 200 seats in the Finnish Eduskunta – a plus of 35 (Raunio, 2014).

Figure 6: EP Elections Voter Turnout since 1994; Source: Eurostat, 2017



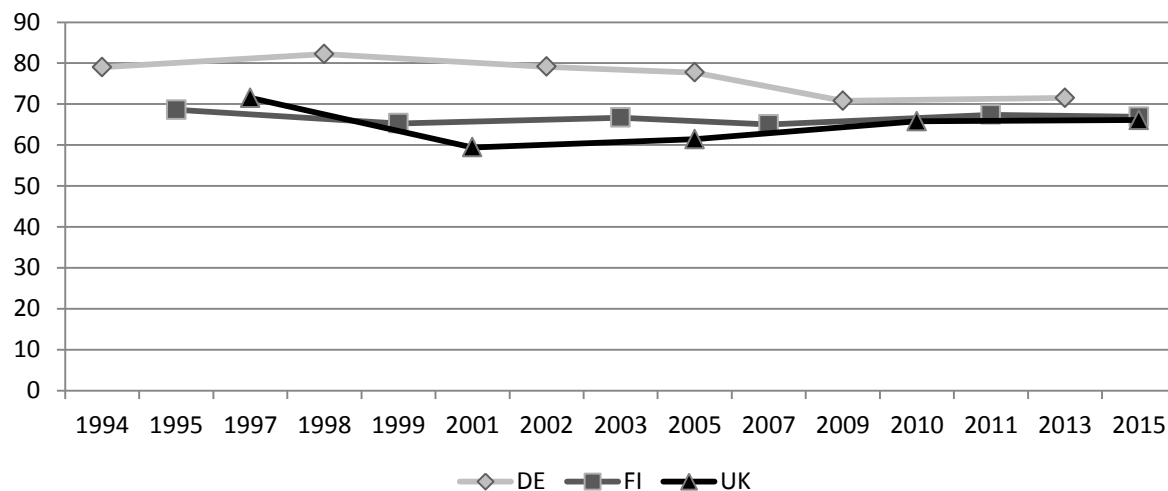
The Finns Party also gained a seat (1 of 13 Finnish seats) for the first time in EP elections in 2009 and even two in 2014. Given the high number of parties in Finland, this is a rather large success (Raunio, 2014; also Raunio, 2016a). They are affiliated with the party group of European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) – together with the British Conservatives (European Parliament, 2014). Turnout in EP elections is very low compared to domestic parliamentary elections in which turnout usually does not drop below 65% (see Figures 6 and 7).

Germany – With regard to public opinion, the founding member Germany was long regarded an advocate of European integration with a rather Europhile public. This is closely connected to German history and the Second World War: Essentially, the founding of the EC gave Germans the chance to ‘regain their shattered identity in the eyes of the world after ... the Third Reich’ (Schieder and Magone, 2016: 82/83 citing Schild, 2003: 32). However, over time, trust in the EU has declined below EU average. While this still does not result in an overall EU-hostile German public, Euroscepticism was fuelled by the European debt crisis because ‘[a]n unprecedented moral panic about European bailouts and the European Central Bank’s monetary policy created a sense of emergency’ (Grimm, 2015: 264).

Mirroring this development, the German party system could long be described as essentially pro-European (Schieder, 2011; Bulmer and Paterson, 2010). However, the consequences of

the financial crisis did not leave the party system untouched: With a main focus on criticism of the EU and the Euro, and increasingly right-wing populist, even racist tendencies, the *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) was founded in February 2013 (Berbair et al., 2015; Höing, 2015). The party did not manage to gain seats in the German Bundestag in elections in 2013 due to the 5% barring clause but has succeeded in entering regional parliaments. Also in EP elections 2014, the party has gained votes resulting in 7 of the 96 German seats. They are affiliated with the ECR party group together with the Finns Party (European Parliament, 2014). EP elections voter turnout in Germany (see Figure 6) is rather stable at around 45% which is around 20% less than in Bundestag elections (see Figure 7).

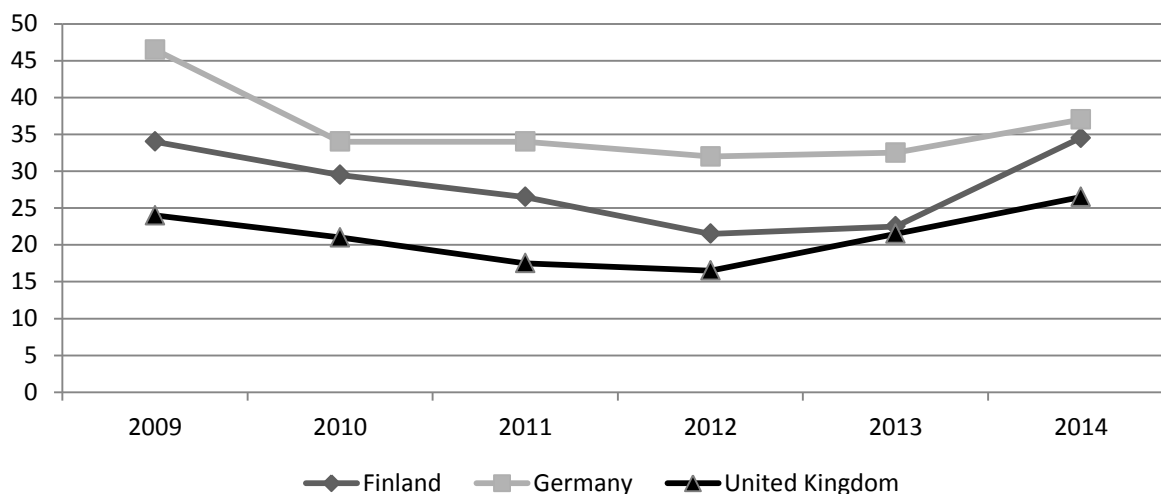
Figure 7: Domestic Elections Voter Turnout since 1994; Source: Eurostat, 2017



The United Kingdom – The UK joined the EU in 1975. Concerning public opinion, the UK is traditionally described as a Eurosceptic country which has, due to sovereignty concerns, opted out of many European agreements such as the Schengen agreement for open EU-internal borders and has refused to introduce the Euro (e.g., Gifford, 2009). Looking at EB data, the UK is more often than not found to be amongst the most negative countries with regard to EU membership and the least aware of EU institutions (Smith, 2016; see also Figure 8). Most recently, Euroscepticism has culminated in the so called Brexit referendum on 23 June 2016 when 51,89% of voters cast their ballot for the UK to leave the EU. As a

result, the UK will be the first country to invoke article 50 of the Treaty of the EU and start negotiations to end their EU membership (Hobolt, 2016).

Figure 8: Average Share of Positive Answers to the Question: ‘Does the EU conjure up a Positive or Negative Image?’; Source: European Commission, 2017



Eurosceptic parties in the UK already emerged during the 1990 as Euroscepticism has always been at the bottom of the UK’s relationship with the EU. They found even more support with the outbreak of the financial crisis: The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) in particular, and most prominently its leader Nigel Farage established themselves as fierce critics of EU politics. The party gained a plus of 11% of seats (27 of 73 British mandates) in the 2014 EP elections. UKIP is not affiliated with the ECR – which is the group of the British Conservatives, but belongs to the harder Eurosceptics in the EFDD Group: ‘Europe of freedom and direct democracy Group’ (European Parliament, 2014). Due to the constraints of the British ‘first-past-the-post’ electoral system in which votes are not represented proportionally, UKIP was unable to win more than one seat in the 2015 general elections despite having won 12,5% of the total vote (Cowley and Kavanagh, 2016). Turnout in EP elections (see Figure 6) is, similar to Finland and Germany, around 30% lower than in elections to the House of Commons (see Figure 7).

Summing up, the three countries are diverse in their public attitudes towards the EU but nonetheless show converging trends over the period of investigation (see Figures 6, 7, and

8). The same is true for the difference in turnout for EP and domestic parliamentary elections which demonstrate the second-order nature of EP elections. In contrast, they have made different developments during the financial crisis regarding the party system: While the already established most Eurosceptic party became stronger in the UK, it was established in Finland with the 2011 national elections. Germany 'lags behind' in this respect with the AfD only founded in 2013. In itself, however, the founding and success of the AfD must be seen as rather extraordinary: Right-wing populism was and still is strongly stigmatised in Germany due to the national-socialist past strongly hampering the success of earlier right-wing parties (Berbuir et al., 2015).

Characteristics of the Media Systems

As discussed earlier, media systems can be arranged along different categories of comparison (see chapter 3.2.2). While Hallin and Mancini (2004) find three models in their attempt to arrange Western media systems, this categorisation is empirically validated and the four initial dimensions extended (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: development of the media market, political parallelism, development of journalistic professionalism, degree and nature of state intervention) by Brüggemann et al. (2014): They differentiate the role of the state by three sub-dimensions including ownership regulation, press subsidies and the importance of public broadcasting (see Brüggemann et al., 2014 for a detailed discussion). The authors employ a cluster analysis of survey data on media systems and achieve a much greater explained variance than Hallin and Mancini (2004) grouping their results in four instead of three models of media systems.

Finland – The Finnish media system is found to be characterised by a high degree of inclusion meaning that media contents reach a broad audience; by a high degree of political parallelism; high professional standards of journalists and a strong role of the state (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). In contrast, political parallelism is found to be very low for Finland in the more recent study (Brüggemann et al., 2014). Since explained variance among the discussed media systems is greater in the more recent models, assuming that Finnish media do not follow the line of political parties closely seems more adequate.

Germany – The German system is described by a strong role of the state, high inclusiveness of the press market, high political parallelism and high journalistic professionalism, belonging to the same model as Finland in Hallin and Mancini's framework. Brüggemann et al. (2014) in their more empirically grounded study, categorise Germany under a different headline. Here, Germany and the UK are in the same group describing the 'Central' media system as rather inclusive, with a strong role of the state regarding public broadcasting and ownership regulation but not press subsidies, moderate political parallelism and moderately high journalistic standards.

The United Kingdom – Hallin and Mancini categorise the UK as a Liberal Model along with Ireland and the U.S. Their model is marked by a weak role of the state, weak political parallelism, a high inclusiveness of the market and high journalistic professionalism. In Brüggemann's study, the UK is put in the same category as Germany.

Summing up, Finland is found to be the most different media system in the sample. Germany and the UK are found to differ more in an ideal type study but belonging to the same category of media systems in an empirical analysis clustering data describing systems.

All in all, diversity is greatest concerning national parliamentary traditions. With regard to our research interest in the legitimacy of the EP in public and the strong influence of parliamentary traditions, this is a central category. Countries differ in terms of public opinion, the development of the party system during the crisis and, to a lesser degree, media systems. Thus, while the sample comprises only three countries, the degree of diversity in relevant dimensions is deemed sufficient to explore media contents about the EP regarding their effects on public opinion and the effects of parliamentary activities on media contents.

4.2.3 Newspapers

The *selection of newspapers* as data source is regarded a viable research strategy for addressing the formulated research questions based on the following considerations. Especially broadsheet or quality newspapers are found to be opinion leaders influencing the contents of other outlets (Trenz, 2004, 2007; Bijmans and Altides, 2007). Not surprisingly,

therefore, compared to other outlets, newspapers are also found to have a greater impact on political actors (Walgrave et al., 2008). In addition, newspapers generally have more space for news items than other outlets (see Gattermann, 2011; Kevin, 2003; Trenz, 2004). An analysis of print news therefore captures the most important discursive patterns of EP legitimization in the dominant public sphere; its contents encompass a broad and comparably elaborate discourse a considerably large audience is exposed to.

In addition, media effects studies find newspaper readers to be more attentive than, i.e. citizens watching TV (Chaiken and Eagly, 1976; Hollander, 2014) while studies suggest ambivalent effects of internet news exposure compared to exposure to print news (Facorro and Defleur, 1993; Eveland and Dunwoody, 2002). Against the background that media effects are hard to measure, these findings give reason to believe that it might be more likely to find effects with newspaper readers than with other outlets. It might, however, also be connected to what we discussed in the preceding paragraph, namely that newspapers are found to be more influential.

Newspapers are selected according to their nation-wide distribution, circulation and political stance (center-right and center-left). Moreover, the journalistic standard is considered by including not only broadsheet or quality newspapers (as, e.g., Gattermann, 2011) but also the biggest tabloid newspaper in the country with regard to its distribution. In doing this, the analysis looks at a broader audience: While broadsheets are usually connected to political elites as an audience, tabloids have a more diverse readership (see Koopmans and Statham, 2010; De Vreese et al., 2006 for similar research designs).

Table 2: Selection of Newspapers, Databases and Search Strings Used for Retrieval

	Journalistic Standard/ Political Stance	Newspaper	Database	Search String
DE	Tabloid	BILD	Factiva & database of Austrian Press Agency (APA)	<i>Europa-Parlament* OR EP OR Europa-Wahl* OR Europawahl* OR EU- Wahl OR "Europäische* Parlament*" OR Europaparlament* OR EU-Parlament* OR Europa-Abgeordnete* OR EU-Abgeordnete* OR Europaabgeordnete*</i>
	Quality / Conservative	Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung	2009: Paper versions FAZ Biblionet & database of Austrian Press Agency (APA)	
	Quality / Liberal	Süddeutsche Zeitung	SZ LibraryNet & database Austrian Press Agency (APA)	
FI	Tabloid	Ilta-Sanomat	Online-Archive of IL; media arkisto (Lexis-Nexis type database for Finnish newspapers)	<i>Mep* OR Eurovaal* OR Europarlament* OR EU-parlament* OR parlament* OR euroedustaj* OR euroehdok* OR EU-vaal*</i>
	Quality / Conservative	Aamulehti	Online-Archive of AL; media arkisto (Lexis-Nexis type database for Finnish newspapers)	
	Quality / Liberal	Helsingin Sanomat	Online Archive of HS	
UK	Tabloid	The Sun	Lexis Nexis	<i>BODY(European Parliament OR EU Parliament OR allcaps(EP) OR caps(MEP!) OR Strasbourg Parliament OR Euro election* OR EU election* OR European w/p election*)</i>
	Quality / Conservative	The Times		
	Quality / Liberal	The Guardian		

In addition, research has found variance to be greater amongst different newspaper outlets than between TV outlets (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000) which is clearly serving our goal to maximise diversity in the sample. On a more pragmatic note, newspaper formats are also found to be more easily comparable across countries (Slaatta, 2006).

4.3 Data Retrieval, Coding and Processing

For the retrieval of articles from online databases, Boolean search strings were used. They included terms used for the description of the European Parliament and EP elections in general (see Table 2). We validated these terms in reference to other studies (e.g., Gattermann, 2011) and by intense reading of the actual material. If an additional term did not yield more articles, we did not include it in the search string since some of the databases used could only handle a certain number of search terms. Moreover, search strings had to be adjusted to the respective 'language' of the database. This was mainly a question of which truncation mark should be used (* or \$, for example) when only the stem of the term was included to retrieve all possible forms of a word.

Furthermore, articles were not included if they were not published in the national issue: In Germany, for example, the tabloid contains sections that have changing contents depending on the area in which they are distributed. All articles were retrieved from online databases, such as Lexis Nexis and Factiva, but also newspapers' own databases (i.e., all Finnish newspapers).

A pre-test was conducted in order to test and further develop the codebook. For this, one month (March 2014; N=415 articles in total) was coded for all nine newspapers under investigation. Based on this pre-test, then, we decided to code only every second day of the six weeks spanning May and June to construct a representative, yet manageable sample. The pattern was rotated to avoid bias: If one week covered Monday, Wednesday and Friday, the next week covered Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Sundays were not included in the sample since not all selected newspapers publish on Sundays.

Different parts of the dataset were used for different empirical analyses (see Table 4 for an overview). For our descriptive results, we used the combined set of all four periods since one of the main incentives to code these four periods was to understand differences between elections and routine times.

In the second empirical analysis (chapter 6), the data on EP coverage was combined with data from the research project PACE (Parliamentary Communication of Europe)⁵ which focusses on national parliaments in EU affairs and the communication by and about them in the media. For this analysis, we could not use data of election periods because PACE data span the years from 2010-2013 only. On a more theoretical note, we also did not want to risk an obvious bias at the expense of national parliaments by looking at a special EP event.

Moreover, regarding the little amount of data coded for routine periods, it still seemed manageable to code every day for the period under investigation. Since data were available for NPs as well, the dataset for this comparison of NPs and the EP was completed by coding all days of EP coverage that had been left out before. Therefore, the dataset here includes every day of weeks 20-25 in 2011 and 2012.

Finally, the third empirical analysis (chapter 7) focusses on the effects of EP coverage on EP support. Mainly due to a lack of data on public opinion and media exposure for the other periods of analysis, we used only election periods here: Content data of every second day was connected to the European Election Survey (EES). Note that further methodological implications are discussed later on in respective chapters.

Given the availability of the data for every day in routine periods, we compared the sample including only every second day by comparing data of the whole population in the 12 weeks in 2011 and 2012 with the sample of every second day. It is highly unlikely that the distribution of articles would follow a completely different logic in election periods than in routine periods since the newspapers in our sample follow a 24h news cycle. We, therefore,

⁵ See also Institute for Advanced Studies (2017) for further information.

assessed the overall adequacy of our sampling strategy for routine periods only and based on the number of articles on one day to gain a general understanding.

Table 3: Population Parameters for Different Samples in Routine Periods

Var.: EP Articles/Day	All	Every Second Day
Mean	0,5848765	0, 6512346
Standard Deviation	1,189425	1,285294
Standard Error (mean)	0,046725	0,0714052
min	0	0
max	8	8
N	648	324

We sampled every consecutive second day of a week also to be able to detect changes over the time of investigation – as opposed to using a random sample, for example. This seemed important especially in election periods where reporting usually increases with the drawing closer of Election Day. Overall, population parameters indicated only small differences between the two routine samples so that we concluded that a sample of every second day was an adequate sampling strategy (see Table 3, e.g., Lacy et al., 2001).

Table 4: Overview of Newspaper Content Data Used in Different Empirical Chapters

Chapter	Data used
Chapter 5: How do newspapers cover the EP?	Combined sample of all four periods; including <i>every second day</i>
Chapter 6: How do parliaments in the EU influence each other with regard to their visibility in the news?	Combined sample of routine periods (2011&2012); including <i>every day</i>
Chapter 7: How do the visibility and tone of newspaper coverage influence public support of the EP?	Combined sample of election periods (2009&2014); including <i>every second day</i>

4.3.1 Article Coding

Reliability for article data was checked by re-coding a random sample of 50 articles in which a proportion of each country's articles was included roughly mirroring their share in the total amount of articles coded: 30 German, 20 Finnish and 10 British articles. Since all coding was conducted by one coder, an intra-coder reliability test was performed roughly 8 weeks after

coding was completed, which was then analysed using the reliability measure proposed by Krippendorff (e.g., Krippendorff, 2004; see Table 5 for an overview). In the following we introduce the variables coded.

The *selection of variables* was on the one hand inspired by other relevant projects in the field, e.g., Austrian National Election Studies (Austrian National Election Studies 2017) or the PIREDEU Media analysis of European Elections (European University Institute – Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, 2017). On the other hand, we developed our coding scheme during the pre-test discussed earlier. Since the goal of the study was to detect broader patterns in EP coverage that could then be used for a quantitative analysis, we decided to keep the coding scheme rather simple. In addition, material for this rather short period of time did not provide much diversity in the characteristics of news: Some variables that were initially included were dropped because the characteristic was simply not found often enough. Such were, for example, the portrayal of the EP as a strong or weak institution (N=65) or if EP elections were depicted as relevant or not in the sense that citizens should go and cast their vote (N=105).

Apart from the coding of country, newspaper (outlet and name), date and title, a category on the Meta data of articles included the articles' *placing in the paper*, the *newspaper section* in which they were published and the style in which the text was written (*genre*).

The variable of *scope* assessed the prominence of EP news in an article. (1) Some articles only peppered in the EP in terms of additional information in another context. For example, EP elections very often served as a reference date in the beginning of a news story on, e.g., a national political discussion relating to a sensitive topic that may potentially affect campaigning. Moreover, the attribute of being an MEP or a candidate in EP elections was sometimes used to describe politicians (e.g., an Ex-MEP on another, non-EU issue). Such articles, in which the EP only appeared in a '*flash*' were counted but not coded in detail since they do not represent substantive EP news. (2) For the clear majority of articles we made a judgment on how elaborately the EP was dealt with: Was it highlighted as a *main topic* or did

the article only shortly dwell on EP news *in passing* while focussing on other news? Note that EP news here comprised any EP topic: EP elections or actual EP politics.

The *policy issue* of the article was coded in accordance with the EU's legal documents' database Eur-lex (European Union, 2017a); this categorisation is used by the European institutions to assign all the EU's legal documents to a policy field. It provides 20 different policies, e.g., transport, energy, fisheries or agriculture. However, the scheme proved too fine-grained for detecting overall patterns in EP news since some policy fields were not mentioned often enough. In addition, a large number of articles did not deal with any policies at all or only talked about elections. Therefore, categories were aggregated based on theoretical considerations and their empirical importance in the sample. Note that issues were always coded for the whole article, notwithstanding the scope of EP news within the articles.

Eventually, the category comprised five policy areas: Institutional issues (e.g., EU budget, treaties), single market policies (e.g., agriculture, taxation, education, etc.), financial policies as an extra-category giving credit to the salience of the financial crisis, external policies (e.g., defence and trade), and internal security (e.g., migration, Schengen) including normative issues. Normative issues were, for example, the discussion about (the lack of) a European demos or solidarity amongst Europeans; it is argued that such discussions mirror the internal political climate in terms of the degree of politicisation, for example. In addition, it was coded if the article dealt with no policy area and if it dealt with elections.

Regarding the *actors* coded, we considered the different operating levels of a parliament as mentioned earlier already. Eventually, not only the parliament as an institution, but the actors connected with it appear in the news. In this respect, Marschall (1999) distinguishes three levels along the organisational structures: The parliament as an institution along with the administration, party groups as the meso organisational structure of representatives, and individual representatives themselves. To capture all aspects of parliamentary action, consequently, the *actor* variable is conceptualized along these three operating levels: (1) the EP as a whole, (2) party groups, and (3) individual MEPs. Additionally, a category is included

that marks the mention of (4) 'election actors'. The term depicts actors that are broadly connected to the EP but do not represent it (yet). This concerns election times in particular: (European or national) parties and their representatives and MEP candidates in campaigning. If an article portrayed an actor as an MEP and a candidate at the same time, both was coded. In addition, actors were always coded for the whole article, notwithstanding the scope of EP news within the articles.

Moreover, a variable was coded stating the *political context* or *level* in which the article was situated. In election times, for example, articles very often portrayed EP actors in national campaigning without referring to the EU level or other member states at all. Here, then, the level was coded as domestic. If, however, the article talked about national campaigning in which MEPs or candidates addressed EU level questions such as the two parliamentary domiciles of the EP in Strasbourg and Brussels, the domestic and the EU level were coded. If the article highlighted the discussion in another member state, the coded level was non-domestic-national. Some articles covered EP actors in an international context. For example, two Green MEPs protested in the Ukraine against the treatment of Julia Timoshenko.

Thus, the context variable was a qualitative assessment referring to the political context in terms of actors involved and issues discussed: (1) Domestic discourse and politics in terms of interaction with national actors or issues, (2) non-domestic national issues where non-domestic actors are depicted in connection with EP actors, (3) EU level politics such as the interaction between the EP and the Commission about EU issues, or (4) the involvement of EP actors in an international issue or comments by international actors on EU issues. However, this latter category hardly played a role at all.

It seems important to include this variable due to the multinational nature of the EP as a parliament representing all European citizens: Some studies differentiate political levels by employing a more fine-grained categorisation of the actor variable distinguishing between national actors and EU actors, for example (e.g., De Vreese et al., 2006). However, national actors might interact at EU level only, e.g., in a Council meeting. And MEPs as European actors come from 28 different EU member states portrayed as MEPs in the EP plenary or as

political actors at home. Therefore, this context variable complements the description of which actors and issues are discussed by assessing the political environment in which discussion takes place. Given the irrelevance of the international level in EP coverage, this variable mainly serves to distinguish the national from the EU level. Political levels were always coded for the whole article, notwithstanding the scope of EP news within the articles.

All in all, the variables introduced describe manifest characteristics of the discourse on EP politics: the EP as an actor and EU policies at different political levels. They are used for measuring the overall visibility of the EP in newspaper coverage; these three variables (issues, actors, contexts) allow for multiple entries.

Finally, the *tone* in which the article talked about the EP or a related actor was coded. Here, the tone of an explicit EP evaluation (EP, MEPs or party groups) as well as the tone of the whole article were coded, if the EP or EP elections were covered as a main topic. The evaluation of the EP explicitly excludes the evaluation of ‘election actors’ such as candidates or national parties or politicians campaigning in EP elections that are not directly representing the EP as an institution. Moreover, another variable assessed the tone of the whole article.

The variable of tone was coded based on a qualitative assessment of the text answering the question if the article conveyed positive tonality, e.g., a constructive image of the EP as an actor highlighting its successes, strengths, consensus-finding in the EP, positive outlooks, or solutions of problems – good news; or negative tonality, e.g., a destructive image of the EP pinpointing failures, weaknesses, conflicts, criticism, attacks or resignation – bad news. Another category was a neutral or ambivalent/balanced tone of reporting when it was not possible to determine tonality as positive or negative.

Tonality was coded -1 for negative and 1 for positive portrayals. 0 was coded for neutral/ambivalent tone. Since tonality was mainly used for the assessment of media effects, putting neutral and ambivalent in one category can be justified by the basic assumption that mixed evaluations cancel each other out with regard to effects on attitudes: ‘The condition under which news media are least likely to have an effect is if the public is

exposed to both sides of an issue.’ (De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006b: 20; also Chong and Druckman, 2010; Zaller, 1992, 1996).

Table 5 provides an overview of variables coded with descriptions and reliability measures (Krippendorff’s Alpha). Acceptable values for Krippendorff’s Alpha are usually defined as above .8 for substantive agreement and between .667 and .8 for more exploratory analyses from which researchers can draw tentative conclusions (Krippendorff, 2004: 241; also Lombard et al., 2002: 593).

With some of our coded variables, agreement is rather substantial, especially the actor variables and the non-domestic context. The reliability score for our scope variable mirrors the difficulty of determining the qualitative importance of the EP as a topic in articles of, e.g., different lengths. The coding of the EU context variable proved to be challenging since it was sometimes hard to distinguish the EP actor as representative of an EU level institution from the EU context. Given the exploratory nature of our empirical analysis, however, we can regard the values yielded as satisfactory and fit for drawing first conclusions about a rather neglected topic in the discussion of the EP’s legitimacy.

Table 5: Description and Reliability of Variables Coded in Content Analysis

VARIABLE	SCALING	POSSIBLE ENTRIES	QUESTION/ DESCRIPTION	K. α
Placing	1- ∞	Page numbers	On which page was the article published?	--
Section	Nominal	0: Politics/News 1: Economics 2: Non-political (e.g., Feuilleton) 3: Opinion 4: Topics of the Day	In which newspaper section was the article published? (newspapers' own categorisation)	0.87
Genre	Nominal	0: Report/Hard News 1: Editorial/Commentary 2: Interview/Portrait	Was the article written in a rather descriptive style, in a more interpretative/commentary style, or in a Q&A style or portraying an actor?	0.74
Scope	Ordinal	0: Flash; e.g., as an attribute of an actor (e.g., Lasse Lehtinen, ex-MEP, ...) 1: In Passing (e.g., one paragraph about the EP in a longer article) 2: Main Topic (whole article on EP as at least one of the main topics)	To what extent does the article cover EP news?	0.68
ONLY CODED FOR SCOPE = IN PASSING or MAIN TOPIC; multiple entries possible for <i>Issues, Actors</i> and <i>Contexts</i>				
Policy Issue	Nominal (binary)	None	Which policy issues were discussed in the article?	0.73
		Elections (e.g., Campaigning)		0.79
		Financial (e.g., relating to Financial Crisis)		0.79
		Institutional (e.g., Treaty Reforms, EP electoral system)		0.76
		Internal (e.g., Migration, Solidarity)		0.73
		External (e.g., External Trade and Security)		0.78
		Single Market (e.g., Social Policy, Taxation, Customs Union, Fisheries, etc.)		0.70

Continued

Actor	Nominal (binary)	MEPs (individual and groupings)	Which actors were discussed in the article?	0.84
		Party Group		0.87
		EP as an Institution		0.75
		Election Actors (e.g., Campaigning Politicians at EU and National Level)		0.84
Political Level / Context	Nominal (binary)	EU	Which political levels were discussed in the article?	0.69
		Domestic		0.73
		Non-Domestic		0.86
		International		0.78
ONLY CODED FOR SCOPE=MAIN TOPIC				
Evaluation EP	Ordinal	1: Positive	In which tone did the article evaluate the EP/PPGs/MEPs explicitly?	0.70
		0: Neutral/Ambivalent		
		-1: Negative		
Tone of Articles	Ordinal	1: Positive	In which tone did the article evaluate EP news in general?	0.66
		0: Neutral/Ambivalent		
		-1: Negative		

4.3.2 Cluster Analysis

In order to structure the descriptive results of the content analysis, we employ a number of cross tabulations to detect patterns in the data. In addition, a hierarchical cluster analysis is performed to better understand the salience of combinations in EP news in the following variables: all actors, contexts and if there is a policy issue discussed or not. As a result, manifest patterns in articles are explicated that dominate the EP's portrayal in newspapers (see Matthes and Kohring, 2009 for a similar approach).

The cluster analysis uses Ward's method based on the minimum variance criterion regarding the assignment of articles to a certain cluster (Ward, 1963). Guided by the Calinski-Karabasz criterion that describes the ratio of variance between clusters to the variance within a different number of clusters identified in the dataset (Calinski and Karabasz, 1974), an elbow point is defined which helps to set a meaningful number of clusters. With a decreasing number of clusters, the elbow point describes the threshold after which the ratio of variance becomes too great: Clusters would then become too heterogeneous in themselves and ultimately more difficult to interpret.

After some initial checks, the issue category was aggregated since it was deemed too fine-grained in a too small sample to allow for a clear interpretation. A large part of articles, for example, was found to not discuss any policy issues at all. Therefore, the cluster analysis only included a dummy variable if policies were covered or not, but not which policies exactly were under discussion. Moreover, the EU and the international context were combined since the international level was found to not play a significant role and the most interesting aspect of the context variable is its ability to discern a national from a non-domestic or non-national context. Essentially, thus, it comprises three categories: domestic, non-domestic national, and beyond national (supra- and international).

All variables used for the cluster analysis are asymmetric binary variables. In results, therefore, higher means of a binary variable in a cluster indicate a higher presence of articles displaying this specific characteristic in the cluster. The common measure employed for

identifying clusters in this type of data is the Jaccard coefficient (e.g., Kaufman and Rousseeuw, 2009: 26-28) which is also used here.

The combined dataset spanning all four periods of investigation was is since we are interested in the overall portrayal of the EP and the amount of data for routine periods alone is found to be too small to identify meaningful clusters. Since the thesis is essentially interested in the overall discourse on EP matters, elections as a topic are left out here. We are, however, still able to understand differences between elections and routine periods by cross-tabulating clusters by years and countries.

The variables used for clustering can be seen as an incomplete list of frame elements. What is missing here are the judgments and underlying justifications that attribute positions to topics and/or actors (Entman, 1993; Chong and Druckman, 2007). They show us which actors become visible in what contexts in EP news.

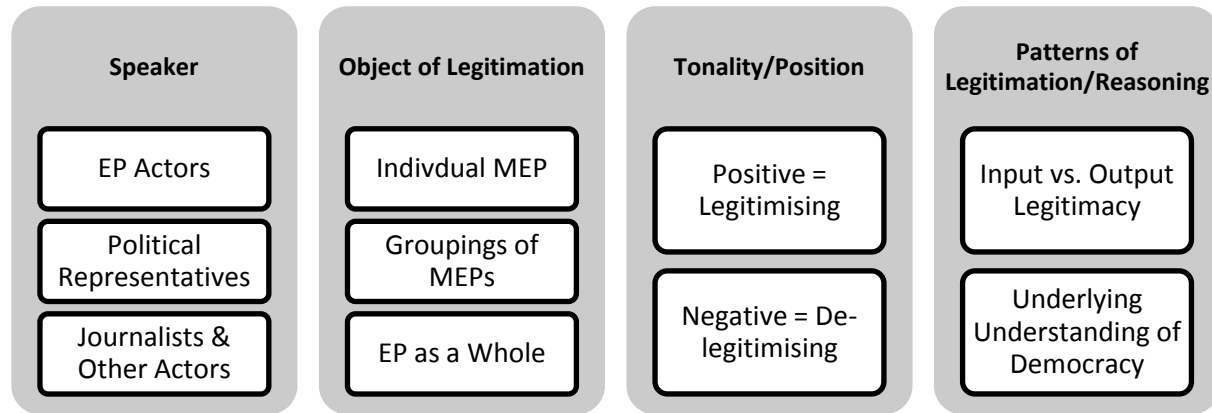
4.3.3 Legitimacy Statements

To complement our results with regard to the tone of coverage and to evaluate the actual framing of the EP, legitimization statements were coded manually (Hurrelmann et al., 2009, 2012; also Michailidou and Trenz, 2012; De Wilde et al., 2011; Koopmans and Statham, 1999 for very similar approaches) – only for the EP as an institution, party groups and MEPs. ‘Election actors’, such as national candidates in campaigning for EP elections, are excluded from this analysis since it is explicitly tailored to assess the legitimacy of EP actors and the EP as an institution in the news media. A legitimization statement’s analytical building blocks or its ‘grammar’ are (1) the object of legitimization: the EP at its three identified operating levels (MEP/groupings of MEPs (e.g., party groups)/EP); (2) the tonality of statements (either positive or negative); and (3) justifications for this judgment along two dimensions which is be further explained later on (input vs. output legitimacy; underlying definition of democracy) (Hurrelmann et al., 2009, 2012).

To account for who is involved in legitimization discourses about the EP, the speaker is coded as well. Here, the default option is the journalist. Direct citations of other actors, such as EP actors or other political representatives, or, e.g., guest commentaries, connect statements

with actors that are not involved in making news directly (see Figure 9 for an overview; see appendix Table A1 for detailed coding instructions).

Figure 9: Analytical Building Blocks of Legitimation Statements about the EP



Statements are identified, first and foremost, by the object of legitimation. They are distinguished by altered elements: If any of the four elements changes, a new statement is coded, no matter how long the statement is. All aspects have to be present to qualify for a statement (see Table 6 for examples); this slightly differs from the works of Hurrelmann et al., who also take ‘generic’ evaluations without justifications into account. It is argued that, since the evaluation of the EP in terms of tone is another aspect of the analysis at hand, it is safe to neglect such ‘incomplete’ legitimacy frames for our purposes.

The speaker is either explicitly mentioned in the text or is the author of the article. Speakers include journalists themselves, EP actors (same categories as object of legitimation) and other political representatives, such as domestic political actors, political actors of other member states. In the same category as journalists, also other non-political actors such as representatives of the church, for example are coded (see appendix Table A1 for more detailed coding instructions). Tonality is coded according to negative or positive terms mentioned in the text (see also ‘tonality’ measure discussed in chapter 4.3).

While the coding of speaker, object and tonality is comparably straight forward, patterns of legitimation categorised along the two dimensions of (1) input and output legitimacy and (2)

the underlying definition of democracy (Hurrelmann et al., 2006b, 2009, 2012) are introduced in more detail.

Table 6: Examples of Legitimation Statements Coding of Object, Tone and Subject

Original Statement	<i>A LIBERTAS candidate says he is sick and tired of Irish fishermen being "shafted" in the EU. ...: "Irish MEPs in Europe have sat idly by as Ireland's fishing rights have been swept away. This is a scandal beyond words."</i>
Speaker	A LIBERTAS candidate (Non-EP 'Political Representative')
Object of Legitimation	Irish MEPs ('Groups of MEPs')
Tonality	Negative = De-legitimising
Original Statement	<i>These victories [of openly xenophobic and nationalist parties, O.E.], in an election to a parliament with little real power, on a very low turnout, can be overstated.</i>
Speaker	Journalist ('Other Actors')
Object of Legitimation	EP as an institution
Tonality	Negative = De-legitimising

Input vs. output legitimacy

As discussed earlier, we can first distinguish between two sources or types of legitimacy: Input and output legitimacy. While the original distinction is closely connected to the works of Fritz Scharpf (1999), Hurrelmann and colleagues argue that Scharpf's concept is too strongly rooted in a democratic definition itself, so that it has to be slightly altered to make a connection with the second dimension (underlying definition of democracy) possible (Hurrelmann et al., 2006b: FN 8). Therefore, in contrast to Scharpf's government 'by the people' (input) and 'for the people' (output), '[a] pattern of legitimation is called input-oriented if it refers to the process of decision-making, in particular to the actors involved and the procedures followed. A pattern is output-oriented if it refers to the results of the process, their quality and consequences' (Hurrelmann et al., 2006b: 8). Hence, in order to be categorised as input legitimacy oriented, a statement, e.g., needs to mention procedural aspects connected to, e.g., transparency or accountability; in turn,

output-oriented issues focus on political results judged against, for example, the standards of efficiency or their contribution to the public good (see Table 7).

On the input side, the EP is the only directly elected institution at EU level which presents a strong argument to ascribe it high input legitimacy. On the output side, the competencies of the EP were quasi non-existent in the very beginning of European integration, but have grown considerably, most recently with the Lisbon Treaty that entered into force in late 2009 - after the 2009 EP elections. Looking at whether newspapers stress input or output legitimacy in their reporting about the EP allows investigating if the institutional strength of the EP is also expressed in an emphasis or at least more mention of its output by which journalists make citizens aware of these qualities. It also sheds light on where the legitimising potential of the EP is seen and hence, how the EP could help to legitimise EU politics.

Underlying definition of democracy

A second dimension concerns the grounding of legitimacy frames in democratic principles. A very undemanding and reduced definition of democracy is adopted on which the distinction of democratic/non-democratic is based: It is defined as being 'a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by the citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives' (Schmitter and Karl, 1996: 103).

Hurrelmann et al. include the understanding of democracy in the typology by explicitly referring to the fact that democracy has been described as being in a process of transformation due to globalisation developments. Testing whether legitimisation debates are mainly built on legitimating arguments that are not rooted in democratic theory 'may be interpreted as a second kind of legitimacy crisis' (Hurrelmann et al., 2006a: 15) because traditional benchmarks of democracy would lose their ground, and a transformation, rather than an erosion of legitimacy would be at stake. This dimension seems especially interesting given the heated discussion about what kind of democratic standards should be applied to the EU. After all, legitimisation patterns in the case of the EP concern the legitimacy of a

political entity that commits itself to the principles of democracy in which the EP is considered a core institution (see also chapter 2.1).

Table 7: Patterns of Legitimation; Source: Hurrelmann et al., 2006b: 9

	Democratic	Non-democratic
Input (characteristics of political processes)	Popular sovereignty	
	Accountability	
	Participation	Charismatic leadership
	Legality	Expertocratic leadership
	International legality	Religious authority
	Transparency	Tradition
	Credibility	Moderation
	Deliberation	
Output (characteristics of political results)		Effectiveness
		Efficiency
	Protection of human rights	Distributive justice
	Democratic empowerment	Stability
	Contribution to public good	Identity
	Reversibility	Morality
		Sovereignty
		Good international standing

Legitimizing aspects not rooted in democratic theory include, for example, the charisma of political leaders or their religious authority, but also the contribution of political output to the forming of a collective identity. In an inductive analysis, the patterns along the two dimensions are identified as shown in Table 7.⁶

Other studies based on legitimation statements analysis employ intra-coder reliability tests given the complex nature of the justification variable. It was argued that it needs a high level of training in order to understand the scheme and code correctly. In addition, such studies usually employ rather comprehensive search strings including a dictionary with legitimising or delegitimising vocabulary (e.g., (in-)transparent, (im-)moral, etc.) and in doing this,

⁶ The coding scheme was developed in a project, funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, at the University of Bremen - Collaborative Research Center 597 – *Transformations of the State; Project B1: Transformation of Democratic Legitimation via Internationalization and Deparliamentarization* under the supervision of the principal investigators Roland Lhotta and Frank Nullmeier. We would like to thankfully acknowledge the support by Steffen Schneider who sent us the codebook that was not available online any more (see University of Bremen, 2012).

identify statements quasi-automatically. Since we also coded the articles themselves, we identified statements manually. This made the assessment of unitizing reliability necessary which tests if statements as the unit of analysis are identified as relevant also in a second assessment. Here, our test yielded an agreement of 81%. In addition, since data was only coded by one coder, we also conducted an intra-coder reliability test which yielded satisfactory results (Krippendorff's $\alpha = 0.7 - 0.94$ for Object, Subject and Tone) on all variables but the justification variable (Krippendorff's $\alpha = 0.46$; see appendix Table A1 for overview of results); this seems mainly due to the variable categorising statements' justifications according to their underlying stricter or broader definition of democracy ($\alpha = 0.33$). Given the very small amount of statements identified (N=110), we also re-assessed statements several times during and after coding. In doing so, we have continuously re-evaluated the validity and reliability of the coded data which, however, did not improve reliability of the justification variables.

In our view, this indicates that the patterns identified by Hurrelmann et al. might have to be further developed or adjusted to fit the analysis of EP coverage explicitly: The justifications connected to EP evaluations may be too fine-grained or relating to, for example, political contestation within the EP so that the categories by Hurrelmann et al., developed to categorise justifications given in statements about the EU as a whole, are too broad and therefore difficult to assign. Furthermore, the indicator to categorise a justification as input-oriented refers to actors or procedures which, in the case of the EP, would seem a default option when individual MEPs are evaluated. In addition, reasons for positive or negative evaluations of the EP may have been difficult to connect to a broader or stricter definition of democracy since it is, in itself, a core institution of representative democracy. Therefore, as the institution assembling representatives that compete or co-operate on behalf of their constituency (Schmitter and Karl, 1996), is quasi automatically included in a stricter definition.

Given the very low number of evaluative statements yielded, we refrain from developing an own scheme for this thesis since it would mirror justifications of a very fragmented and

almost non-existing discourse. Instead, we use the approach by Hurrelmann et al. but resort to a more descriptive analysis of justifications: In doing this, we only take such justifications into account that were coded most (> 10 times) according to the scheme by Hurrelmann et al., since this at least hints at a distinct pattern that might underlie justifications, and illustrate them with examples. Thus, for interpretations based on quantitative results, we only use variables found reliable in our tests (object, subject and tone) and illustrate justifications more descriptively on the basis of the most frequent justifications coded.

5 How Do Newspapers Cover the EP?

The following chapter gives an extensive overview of the results of our content analysis. In doing this, it aims at answering RQ1 regarding *how newspapers cover the EP* in different EU member states in terms of visibility and tone. To begin with, a brief section formulates hypotheses derived from the literature discussed in chapter 2.2. The remainder of the chapter is dedicated to the discussion of results. It starts with the visibility of the EP and wraps up findings by grouping their most important characteristics in clusters. The second part turns to the evaluation of the EP in newspapers regarding the tonality and its framing with reference to its legitimacy. We assess the validity of hypotheses again in a concluding section before turning to our next empirical analysis.

5.1 Expectations

With regard to the patterns in EP newspaper coverage, there are several expectations that can be derived from the literature. First of all, research has found that the visibility of EU news has increased over time (e.g., Van der Brug and De Vreese, 2016a: 278; also Boomgaarden et al., 2010; Schuck et al., 2013). Accordingly, we assume that, also in EP coverage, we will find more articles in 2014 than in 2009. In addition, as elaborated in the methods section, elections are often used as periods of analysis because the special event promises an increased amount of analysable data and, with the higher salience, a potentially

richer discourse on the topic of investigation (e.g., De Vreese et al., 2006). Consequently, we expect coverage to be more extensive in elections than in routine periods. Furthermore, tabloid newspapers have been shown to report considerably less on political issues than quality newspapers. Accordingly, we assume that we will detect a similar pattern in our results.

H_{1-A}: There will be more coverage of the EP in later periods.

H_{1-B}: There will be more coverage of the EP in election than in routine periods.

H_{1-C}: There will be more coverage of the EP in quality newspapers than in tabloids.

Regarding the context prominent in EU coverage, studies looking at EP elections have found that reporting is strongly biased towards a national angle (see Schulze, 2016 for an overview). This is a pattern we may also expect for EP coverage, especially since we look at elections as well. Another bias may present itself in the variables of policy issues due to the fact that our periods of investigation are set up during the time of the European financial crisis. Thus, we expect a high number of articles discussing financial matters due to the increased saliency of the topic.

H_{2-A}: A large share of articles will discuss EP news in a national context.

H_{2-B}: A large share of articles will discuss EP news in connection with financial policies.

Considering the tone of reporting, we expect that explicit evaluations as opposed to neutral or ambivalent ones, will be mostly negative in line with similar research on news values and EU news in particular (e.g., De Vreese et al., 2006; also Lengauer et al., 2012).

H₃: Explicit evaluations of the EP will be rather negative than positive.

With regard to the different countries under investigation, the literature suggest that there is no overarching European public sphere but rather Europeanized national public spheres (e.g., Brüggemann and Kleinen-von KönigsLöw, 2009; Kleinen-von KönigsLöw, 2012). National differences in reporting have also been connected to different electoral systems, differing

levels of public support for EU membership or diverse journalistic and parliamentary cultures in individual countries (e.g., Gattermann, 2011). Therefore, we expect that reporting in Finland, Germany and the UK will show different patterns in EP coverage as well.

H₄: EP news coverage will show different patterns regarding visibility and tone in different countries.

5.2 Visibility and Tone in EP News Reporting

Having stated the overall expectations, we now turn to discussing our empirical results. We analysed a total number of N=1728 articles; as discussed earlier, this comprises only every second day of the 6 weeks periods under investigation.

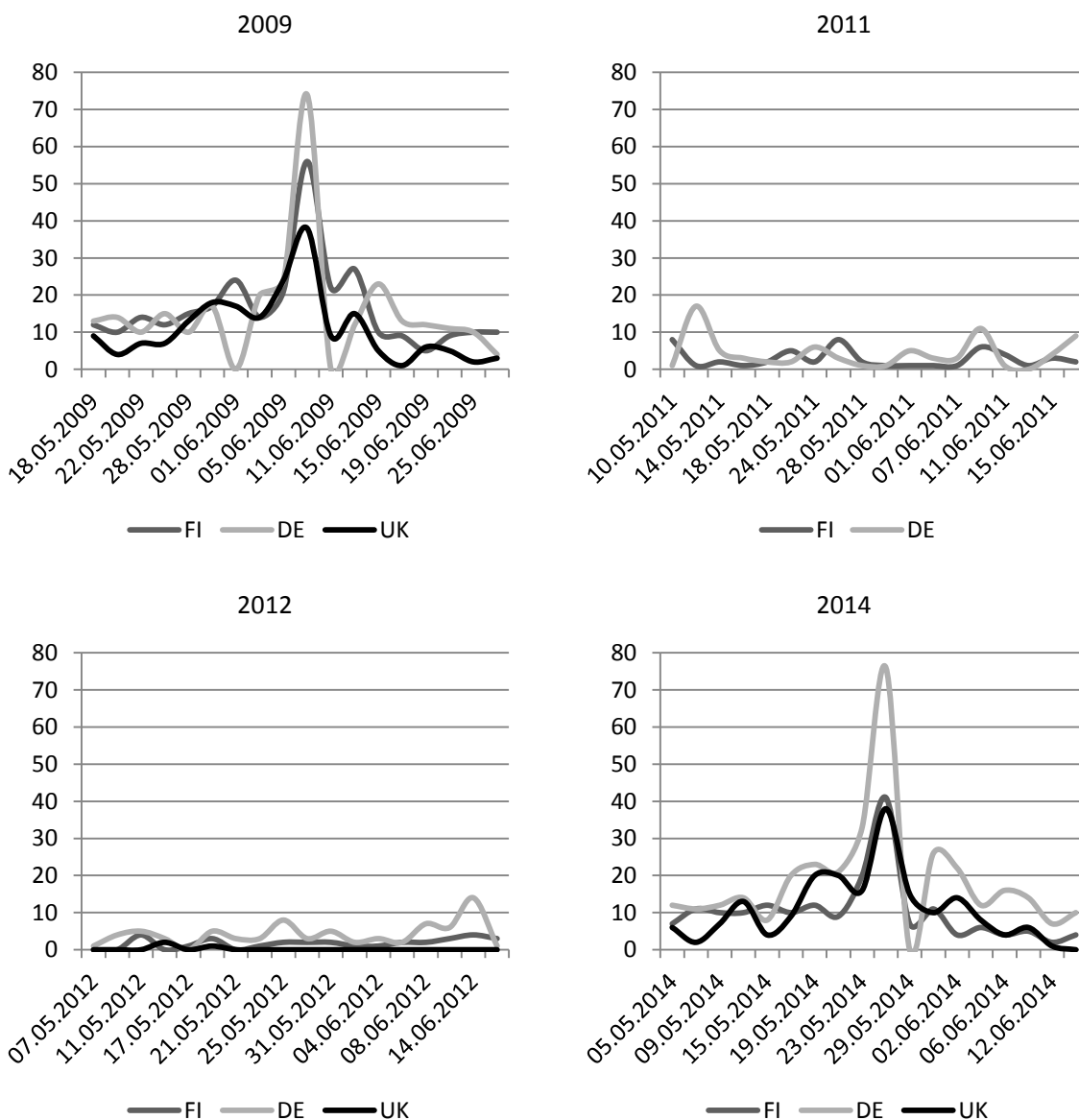
Looking at the *sheer amount of articles in terms of absolute numbers* (see table 8) per country reveals that German newspapers publish most about the EP with Finland ranking second and the UK last. Since the interpretation of absolute numbers is not mirroring the different organisational influences that come with different paper formats (e.g., tabloids), absolute numbers have to be contextualised by reference to other studies.

Table 8: Amount of Articles Coded by Country, Newspaper and Year

	2009	2011	2012	2014	Total
IL	64	11	7	50	132
AL	101	21	8	56	186
HS	132	19	16	79	246
FI Total	297	51	31	185	564
Bild	16	7	3	22	48
FAZ	146	40	38	178	402
SZ	120	30	34	137	321
DE Total	282	77	75	337	771
Sun	43	0	0	47	90
Times	76	0	0	90	166
Guardian	78	0	3	56	137
UK Total	197	0	3	193	393
Total	776	128	109	715	1728

Regarding Germany and the UK, the ‘ranking’ of countries with regard to the amount of news is mirrored in earlier research about the visibility of the EU and/or the EP in news (e.g., Gattermann, 2011; Hurrelmann et al., 2009, 2012). Another finding that is strongly supported by other contributions in the field is that tabloids are least interested in EP news as they have been found to cover political news as such to a much lesser extent (e.g., Boomgaarden et al., 2013).

Figure 10: Amount of Newspaper Articles by Country and Year



In line with the expectations formulated earlier, coverage in election periods increases with the drawing closer of Election Day and accordingly declines afterwards.⁷ Moreover, the picture is rather different for routine periods in which coverage is much lower and a distinct pattern is not discernible across countries. Note that Figure 10 displays the absolute numbers of articles.

In Great Britain, there is almost no coverage of the EP; it is also the country with lowest coverage during elections 2009. For 2014, British and Finnish newspapers in the sample are rather even in their coverage since Finnish papers covered the 2014 elections less. This may be explained by the huge success and the after-elections discussions of the, until then, small Finns Party in 2009 (Arter, 2010; see also discussion on case selection in chapter 4.2).

Hence, the expectation that visibility of the EP increases over time is not confirmed entirely by the study at hand but shows differences across countries: Visibility decreases in the case of Finland due to national implications; it stays rather stable in the British case and only increases in Germany.

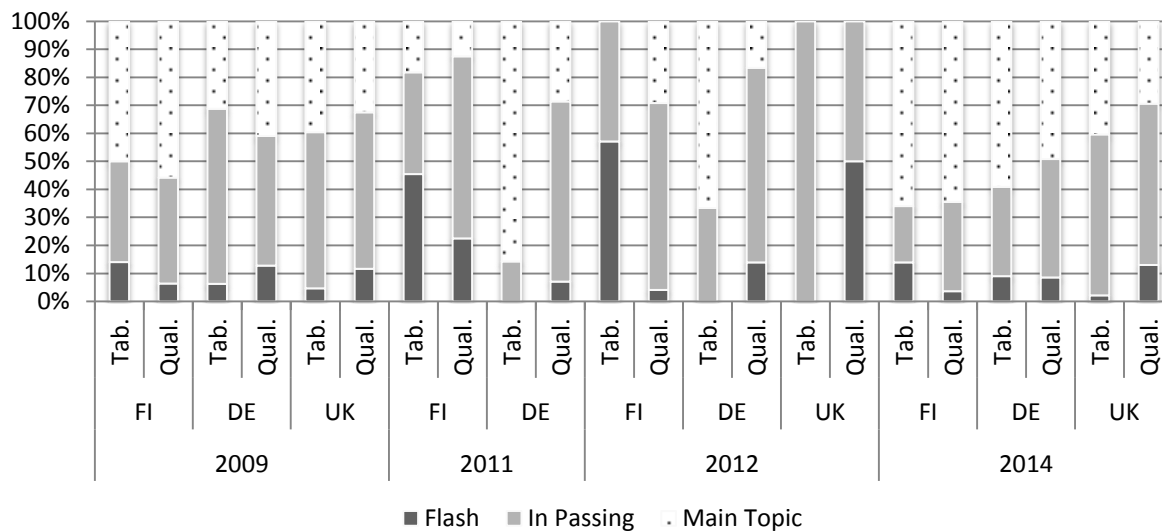
The qualitative assessment of the *prominence of the EP within single articles* shows that the EP is covered more often as a main topic than in passing in election periods, with a tendency to more main topic articles in 2014. The amount of articles that touch upon the EP in passing is found to be higher in routine periods (see Figure 11; note that 100% refers to all articles coded).

Peppering in the EP in articles ('flash') that deal with other topics (e.g., elections as reference date or the function as MEP or election candidate mentioned as an attribute to a politician) is a phenomenon that seems more prominent in quality newspapers than in tabloids. This may be seen as an indicator that quality papers' journalists anticipate that this information, even without contextualising it, will be relevant and classifiable for their readership whereas tabloids do not. In Finland, however, the opposite seems to be true. However, many articles in Finnish tabloids deal with, for example, personal portraits or interviews in which the

⁷ 1 May 2009, 11 June 2009 and 29 May 2014 were public holidays in Germany. The newspapers in our sample did not publish on these days.

function of MEP or an earlier candidacy for EP elections is shortly mentioned as an additional attribute. Note that this category is only shown here for descriptive purposes. Since such articles do not contain any substantive information on the EP or EP elections, they are not further considered for the analysis which reduces the total number of articles by N=175. In the following, when referring to the total number of observations, the reduced amount including only main topic articles or such covering the EP in passing is considered.

Figure 11: Extent of Mention of the EP in Newspaper Articles



Concerning the *prominence of the EP within the newspaper in terms of placing*, we have to keep in mind, that the placing of news also mirrors the general organisation of contents and different routines in newspapers, e.g., the order of domestic and international news or the number of articles on page 1. Therefore, to capture trends in reporting, categories are defined rather broadly with news on (1) the front page, (2) pages 2-10 and (3) pages beyond 10.

The EP is rarely discussed on the front page. In the UK, there seems to be a trend towards higher page numbers where EP news is published. German EP news is mostly found on pages 2-10 whereas in Finland, the greatest share of news is found on pages beyond ten. For Finland and Germany, the amount of articles discussing the EP as a main topic seems to decrease with increasing page numbers while the opposite is true for coverage touching

upon the EP in passing. Again, UK coverage is found to differ: The Sun and The Times discuss the EP in passing; only The Guardian dedicates a higher amount of news to the EP as a main topic on more prominent pages (see Table 9). These findings go against content analyses of front page news that have suggested a minimally lower visibility for Germany than the UK concerning EU news (Azrout et al., 2012).

Table 9: Share of Articles Arranged by Their Placing in the Newspaper

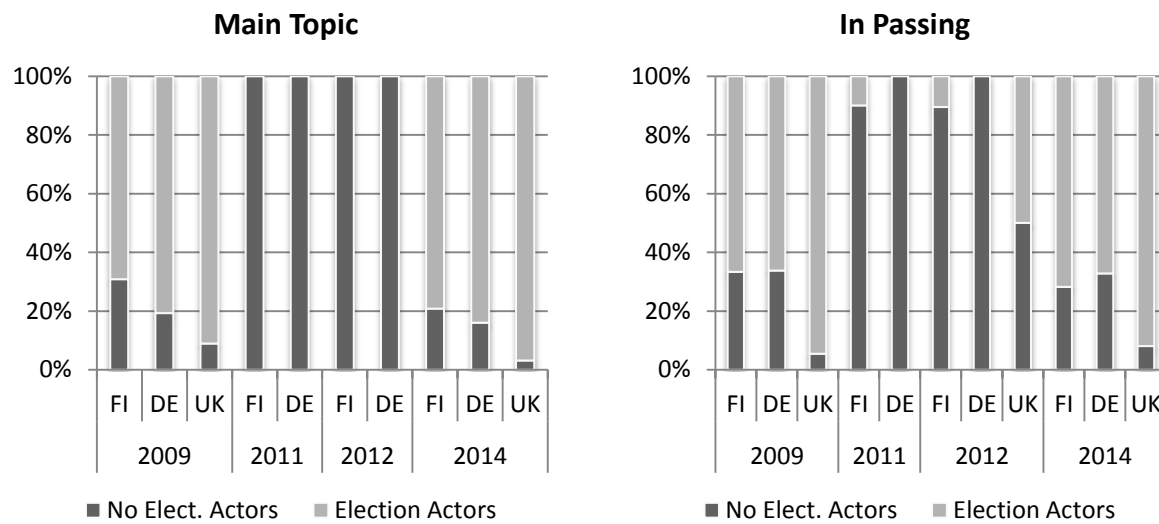
	Front Page	Pages 2-5	Pages 6-10	Grand Total
Tab.	6%	44%	50%	100%
Cons.	6%	55%	39%	100%
<i>FI Total</i>	6%	52%	42%	100%
Tab.	25%	75%	0%	100%
Cons.	9%	58%	32%	100%
Lib.	9%	41%	49%	100%
<i>DE Total</i>	11%	53%	37%	100%
Tab.	2%	46%	52%	100%
Cons.	23%	28%	48%	100%
Lib.	21%	35%	44%	100%
<i>UK Total</i>	16%	36%	48%	100%
Grand Total	11%	49%	40%	100%

Due to the idiosyncrasies of the database for the Finnish liberal newspaper Helsingin Sanomat, it was not possible to obtain page numbers. The same is true for the year 2009 of the Finnish tabloid database (Iltasanomat). Since values are treated as missing, the total number of observations is reduced by N=290 for this specific variable.

Taking a look at which *actors* are featured in EP news reveals that the amount of articles on actual EP actors (MEPs, EP party groups and the EP as such; see Figure 12) does not differ that much in election or routine periods. While the overwhelming majority of articles during election time discuss election actors, e.g., national parties in campaigning or individual candidates, the share of articles dealing with EP actors or both seems roughly stable in the 6 election weeks compared to routine periods.

Due to their distance to the next elections, articles in routine periods in this sample almost never talk about election actors. An exception is the Finnish case with five articles discussing such actors in 2011 and 2012: Here, articles deal with elections in 2009 covering ex-candidates or making a reference to election results in connection with another topic.

Figure 12: Share of Articles Covering the EP as Main Topic or In Passing with Featured Actors



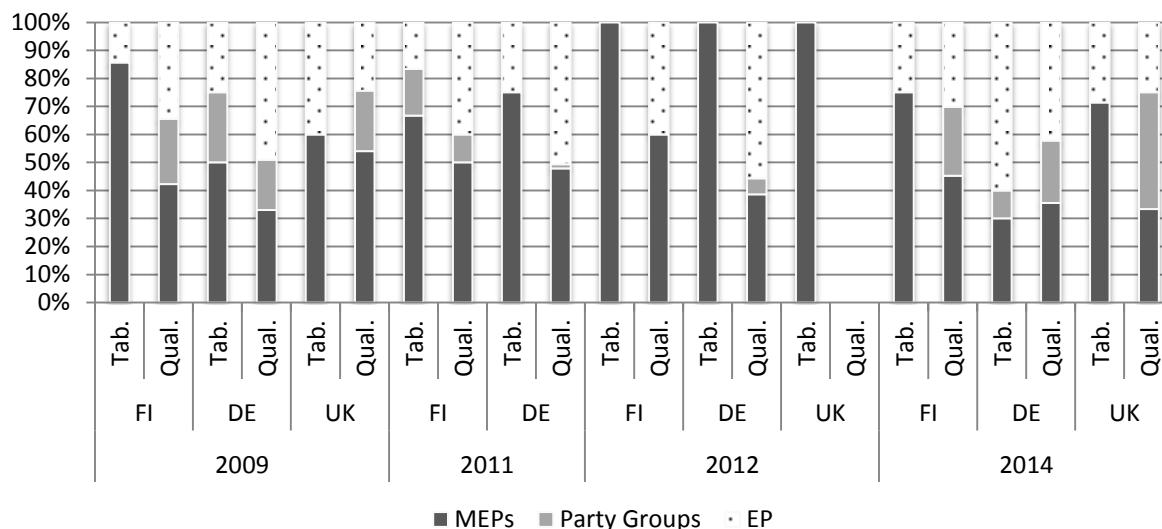
Reconnecting to the prominence of the EP within articles, articles in the high share of ‘main topic’ articles during elections times are mostly discussing election actors (see Figure 12; note that the baseline here is the total number of articles coded as main topic or in passing). The actual percentage of articles discussing the EP, MEPs or EP party groups as a main topic is rather low. Elections, thus, seem to increase coverage for elections and campaigning, but not so much for the actual institution of parliament. Judging from the extent of information about the institution of parliament, MEPs or parliamentary party groups in articles, routine and election coverage are not found to be so different after all. Regarding the prominence of the EP within articles, also in routine periods the EP is rather a side dish than a main course on newspapers’ menus.

Zooming in on the *categories of EP actors* discussed, it does not seem surprising that party groups are discussed least (see Figure 13; note that since the coding allowed for multiple entries, shares display the percentage of entries, not of articles as such. Thus, the reference

category here is the sum of articles for which any of the three actors was coded: All articles featuring MEPs + all articles featuring party groups + all articles featuring the EP, without taking into consideration that one article could mention all three of them).

On the one hand, coverage has been found to be increasingly personalised (for an overview see Van Aelst et al., 2011) which would favour the portrayal of individual MEPs over groups or the institution as such. On the other hand, of the three operating levels, party groups are probably the one unit which would need most contextualising information: They're constituted by national parties that have joined together in European party families. They display the complex multilevel feature of European integration most explicitly (e.g., McElroy and Benoit, 2007).

Figure 13: EP Actors in Quality and Tabloid Newspapers

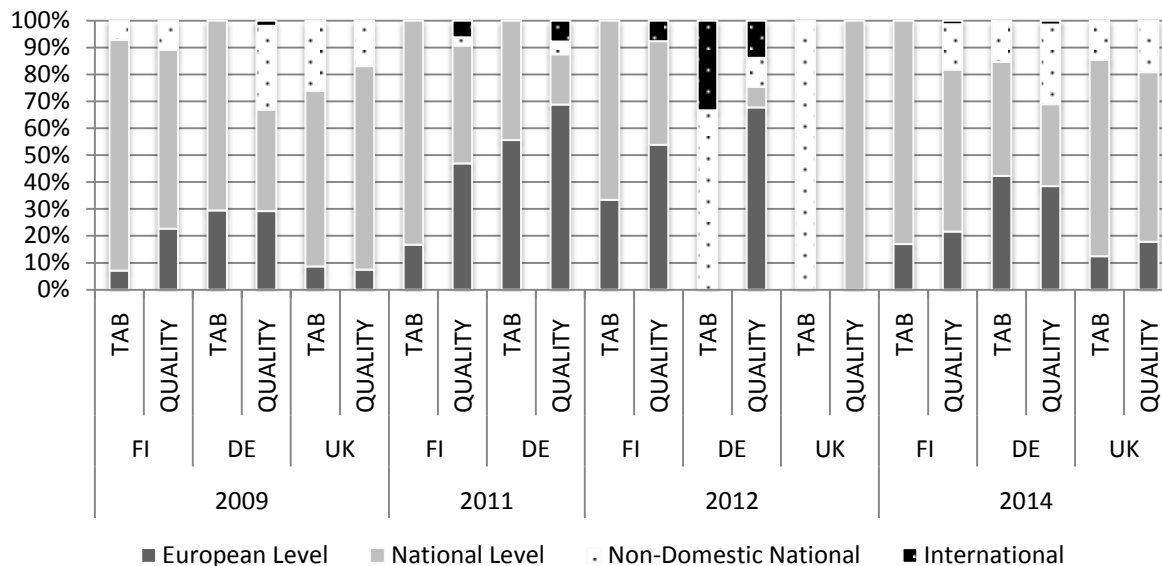


In contrast to MEPs and the EP itself, they are, thus, not as easily comparable to national counterparts and therefore harder to explain to an audience that has been found to resort to heuristics from the national context to make sense of EU politics (e.g., Anderson, 1998).

Articles during elections mainly discuss party groups regarding the formation of such after elections and possible coalitions of national parties. A great deal covers the discussions about the appointment of the presidents of the commission or the EP since a majority in the

EP has to agree on such decisions. Tabloids display a trend towards the coverage of MEPs rather than party groups or the EP which might be an indicator towards the stronger personalisation of news there, as found by, for example, Karvonen (2010).

Figure 14: Political Contexts Featured in Newspaper Articles



With regard to the *political contexts* or foci highlighted in articles about the EP, results strongly pinpoint the second order nature of EP election coverage (see Figure 14; note that also here (as in Figure 13), shares display the percentage of entries, not articles since the coding allowed for multiple entries). While the European level is discussed comparably evenly during routine periods and elections, the majority of news on the national context concentrates on EP elections.

The international context does not play much of a role for EP news, which is easily explained by the more limited EP competencies in this area: While external trade is an area in which the EP is competent, e.g., in the negotiations of the TTIP free trade agreement, external security and defence policy are areas dominated by governments. If articles discuss international politics in connection with the EP, they usually concern comments by MEPs or the president on political topics in connection with, e.g., the Ukraine or the US, or resolutions in which the EP communicates its position concerning international topics.

There is also an interest in *other member states' news* (non-domestic national context) in the course of elections. This phenomenon has been termed 'horizontal Europeanisation' as opposed to vertical Europeanisation which would be indicated by the degree of the EU level's visibility (Koopmans and Erbe, 2004; Koopmans and Pfetsch, 2007; Brüggemann and Kleinen-von Königslöw, 2009). However, other member states are usually discussed during election times with regard to the results of their national EP vote. Here, at least quality newspapers seem to classically fulfil their role as chroniclers of elections whereas tabloids do so to a much lesser degree. Bigger member states are given more attention (DE, FR, GB, IT; see appendix Figure A1), but also neighbour countries seem to be covered more. Other important member states to be discussed are bailout countries, most prominently Greece. In the routine periods investigated, in contrast, other member states are not prominent in EP coverage at all.

Regarding the *policy issues* discussed in EP coverage (see Figure 15; note that, as in Figures 13 and 14, shares display percentages of entries, not articles), the majority deals with either no specific policy issues or election politics. Elections politics, e.g., campaigning, is naturally discussed more often during election times and only rarely in routine periods (e.g., in Finland; note that the coding scheme allowed for elections to be discussed also without election actors mentioned).

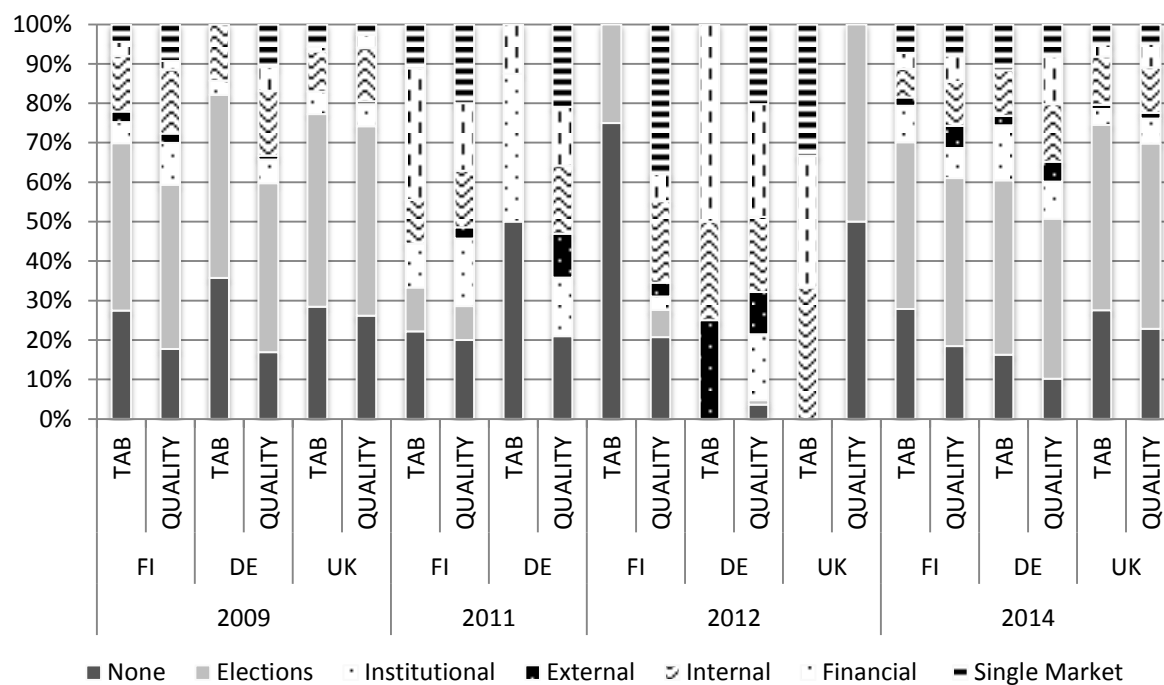
Again, due to the more limited competencies of the EP in external politics, this policy field does not appear that often. Based on the same reasoning, single market issues are found to play a greater role. After all, since December 2009 the majority of these issues are decided under the co-decision procedure in which the EP is an equal legislator to the Council (e.g., Rittberger, 2014). However, the extended competencies in this field do not seem to be expressed in more coverage in 2014 elections.

Apart from genuine EU institutional topics (budget, treaties), the category of institutional issues is coded when national provisions for, e.g., EP elections are discussed. The German Federal Constitutional Court, for example, ruled out the national barring clause of 3% in the

2014 EP elections as discriminatory and unconstitutional (European Parliamentary Research Service, 2014) which is discussed to some extent in German news.

Financial issues including the crisis are discussed to a greater extent in 2014 which mirrors the increased salience of the financial crisis and confirms our expectation (Hurrelmann, 2014; Serricchio et al., 2013). They are also discussed in routine periods in 2011 and 2012 which saw the decisions on bail out packages for Portugal, for example. Since the figure displays the *share of entries*, the greater percentage of articles in routine periods is also simply reflecting the fact that elections were not prominent during that time. In terms of absolute numbers, the amount of articles discussing financial issues is actually found to be much higher in election periods.

Figure 15: Policy Issues Discussed in Newspaper Articles



Internal issues comprises internal security and border control, but it is also coded when the article discusses more normative issues concerning the internal balance of the EU in terms of broader criticism of the EU project, solidarity or (the lack of) a European demos. The amount

of articles discussing such issues is found to be quite comparable between elections while they are, to a much lesser degree, also covered in routine periods.

After having looked into some variables more descriptively, we now take the analysis a step further and look for frequencies in combinations of actors, contexts and topics to understand manifest patterns in EP news. Given the rather small sample of articles, especially in routine periods, some variables are aggregated to make patterns clearer. The cluster analysis including all articles of the four time periods covering the EP at least in passing or as a main topic yields ratios of within and between cluster variance for up to 10 clusters as shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Calinski Harabasz Pseudo F Index and Ratio Difference for up to 10 Clusters

No. of Clusters	Calinski-Harabasz pseudo-F index	Ratio Difference
2	529,3	-80,81
3	610,11	97,8
4	512,31	51,2
5	461,11	12,1
6	449,01	40,25
7	408,76	22,14
8	386,62	-1,36
9	387,98	15,07
10	372,91	

The greatest ratio difference is found between a number of 3-4 clusters (97,8). Merging 5 clusters into 4 does not increase the heterogeneity of clusters (pseudo-F index) as much as merging 4 clusters into 3. Therefore, a number of 4 seems the most adequate solution: Also after some initial checks of cluster characteristics, a number of 4 groups are found to be the clearest and best interpretable solution (see Table 11).

In the following, an account of the characteristics of clusters is given on the basis of which they are named. In a nutshell, thus, the visibility of the EP in elections and routine periods can be broken down to these four patterns (see also Figure 16 for a visualisation of clusters and their characteristics):

(1) Multilevel EP Business: This cluster comprises news in which policies are discussed mainly in connection with the institution of the EP, to a lesser degree also with MEPs, election actors and party groups. The dominant political context here is the non-national level (EU and international). As can be seen from Table 12, this is the biggest cluster which is most evenly dispersed across years. It is therefore termed multilevel EP business since articles deal with the EP as a legislator in different policies – rather unimpressed by elections in comparison to other clusters.

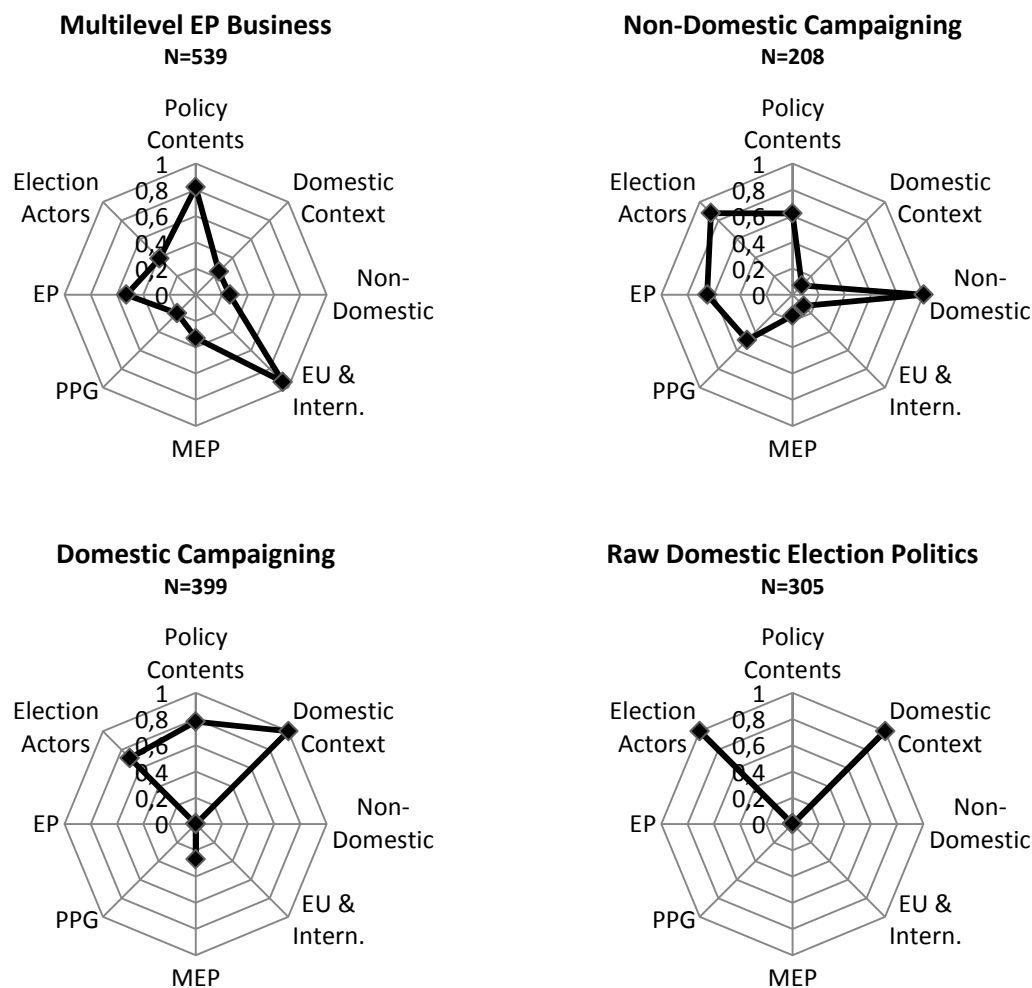
(2) Non-Domestic Campaigning: This cluster comprises articles discussing policy issues, almost exclusively regarding other member states. The dominant actors appearing in these articles are not directly connected to the EP but include candidates and other sorts of election actors. This is confirmed by looking at our cross table (Table 12): such articles appear mostly during elections. The overarching theme, therefore, is termed non-domestic campaigning. With 308 articles, this is only slightly larger than our fourth cluster of articles.

Table 11: Means and Standard Deviations of Binary Variables in Identified Clusters

	Multilevel EP Business		Non-Domestic Campaigning		Domestic Campaigning		Raw Domestic Election Politics	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<i>Policy Contents</i>	0,82	0,38	0,62	0,49	0,78	0,41	0,00	0,00
<i>Context</i>								
Domestic Context	0,25	0,43	0,10	0,31	1,00	0,00	1,00	0,00
Non-Domestic	0,26	0,16	1,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
EU & Intern.	0,94	0,24	0,12	0,32	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
<i>Actors</i>								
MEP	0,33	0,47	0,16	0,37	0,27	0,44	0,00	0,00
PPG	0,20	0,40	0,49	0,22	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
EP	0,53	0,50	0,65	0,25	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
Election Actors	0,39	0,49	0,88	0,33	0,71	0,46	1,00	0,00
N	539,00		308,00		399,00		305,00	

(3) Domestic Campaigning: In this cluster, articles mostly deal with election actors at the domestic level and embed their portrayal in a policy context. Individual MEPs are discussed as well, but to a much lesser degree. Some articles in this cluster are published in routine periods, too. Mostly, however, they deal with electoral topics, discussing strategies for future elections or successes and failures during the last ones. With N=399, the cluster ranks second amongst the four identified.

Figure 16: Visualization of Different Clusters Identified in EP Newspaper Coverage



(4) Raw Domestic Election Politics: Articles in this cluster exclusively deal with the interactions and relationships between non-EP political actors at the national level, such as candidates or national party representatives. News is not embedded in policy contexts and

focusses on 'raw' politics in election times. With N=305, the cluster is the smallest, but also the clearest one among the four identified.

Looking at the absolute number of articles in clusters by years and country (see Table 12), it is confirmed that most news are published during elections, discussing actors that are not directly connected to the institution of parliament as such, in a national (domestic and non-domestic) context. When looking at countries specifically, however, Germany is found to be quite balanced in national and supranational coverage. Moreover, from one election to the other, German coverage of 'raw' EP politics (cluster 4) is the only cluster which becomes less prominent whereas all other clusters become larger in terms of articles. A similar, although much less spelled out, trend is visible in the UK as well whereas Finnish coverage has decreased in 2014 for reasons already discussed.

The UK's coverage mostly deals with 'raw' EP politics at the domestic level (cluster 4): EP coverage in the UK seems to be more disconnected from policy agendas or objectives. In Germany and Finland, the picture looks more balanced in that respect.

Table 12: Number of Newspaper Articles in Clusters by Country and Year

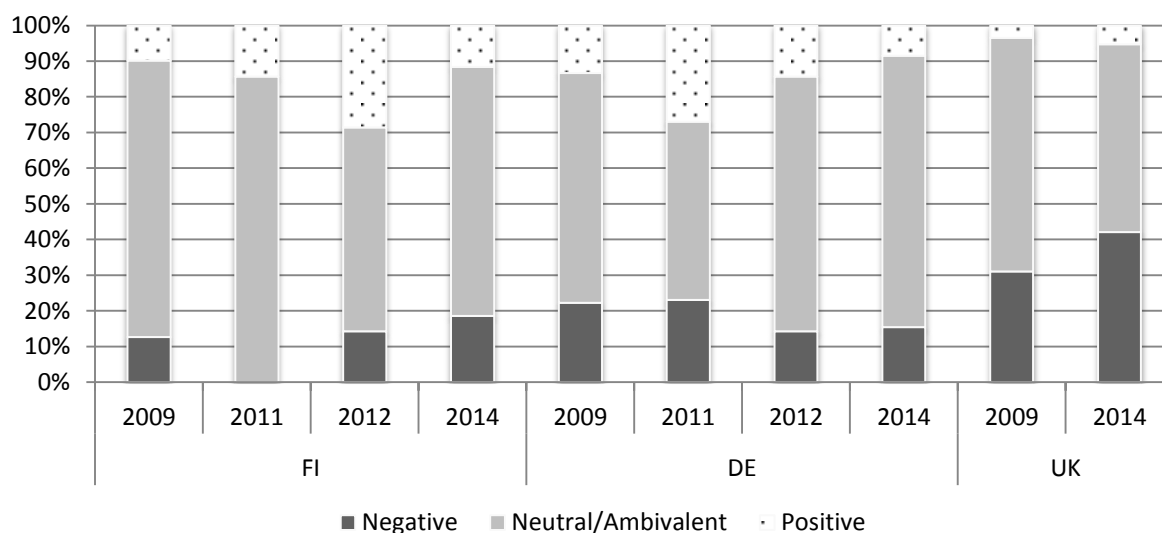
Cluster	FI					DE					UK				
	'09	'11	'12	'14	Total	'09	'11	'12	'14	Total	'09	'11	'12	'14	Total
1	80	24	18	45	167	80	57	53	127	317	22	0	0	33	55
2	29	1	0	23	53	78	3	9	99	189	35	0	1	30	66
3	94	11	8	58	171	53	12	3	59	127	48	0	0	53	101
4	70	1	0	46	117	36	0	0	22	58	72	0	1	57	130
Total	273	37	26	172	508	247	72	65	307	691	177	0	2	173	352

In terms of horizontal Europeanisation, Finnish newspapers are found to cover other member states' EP news least (cluster 2) but publish a greater share of genuine EU-level EP news (cluster 1). The opposite is true for UK news, although differences are not as great: Supranational news is least visible in comparison with other clusters and other member states get only little more attention. In terms of non-domestic EP news, Germany is clearly the one country in which both the interest in other member states and in supranational EP news is highest or at least higher in comparison with other, nationally-oriented articles.

Turning to the *tonality of coverage*, the Meta data of articles (ressort and genre; see appendix Figures A2 and A3) reveal that EP news is mostly published in sections of news as opposed to editorials: The more qualitative assessment coded in the variable ‘genre’ shows that the overwhelming part of articles is published as more fact-oriented news. In line with this, the coding of newspapers’ own categories (sections) shows a similar picture. The EP only sometimes features in sections that are reserved for discussion about societal problems (such as the Feuilleton of the FAZ) or on pages that are explicitly labelled ‘opinion’. The majority of news is labelled as factual reporting which does not indicate that the EP or its legitimacy would be a very polarising topic.

The *evaluation of the EP* is only coded for articles in which EP actors are covered as a main topic (N=332). Election actors such as national candidates are explicitly excluded. Here, a large share of news is written in a rather neutral or ambivalent tone (see Figure 17).

Figure 17: Evaluation of the EP in Articles Covering the EP as a Main Topic



If an explicit evaluation is given, it is more positive in routine periods and more negative in election times. Elections in 2014 also indicate a slight trend towards more negative coverage for Finland and the UK whereas German coverage becomes more neutral or ambivalent. Taking the *tonality of all articles* covering EP topics as main topic (thus including articles that featured election actors only and assessing the overall tonality in the article, not towards

actors individually) shows a similar picture (see appendix Figure A4; N=756) but overall points more towards a less neutral and more negative tone of reporting – interestingly with more negative reporting in routine periods when explicit EP evaluations in contrast are found to be more positive. It also displays more positive reporting in Finnish papers and more neutral assessments in German news for routine periods compared to elections. UK news was often found to be negative with only minor differences between elections.

Deepening the analysis of the tonality of EP coverage, the remainder of this section takes a closer look at the framing of the EP's legitimacy in the news. Overall, while the legitimacy of the EU has become a debated issue (Michailidou and Trenz, 2010; also Ojala, 2013), EP coverage as such does seem to follow this trend. The analysis yielded a total of 110 statements in 1728 articles of three countries and four periods of investigation (see Figure 18). In 70% of the cases, articles contain only one statement. 26,5% of statements come from articles in which 2 were coded and once (2,5%), there are 3 statements coded in an article. Thus, the discussion focusses mostly on one aspect of legitimacy as categorised in this study and one actor.

Other studies using the same method tend to take a much broader stance by focussing on the EU as a whole within larger time frames. They therefore build on larger datasets than we do here (e.g., Beetz, 2009, 2015; Hurrelmann et al., 2009, 2012). However, Hurrelmann et al. (2012: 522) state that

'[t]he most striking tendency [in the discussion about the EU's legitimacy, O.E.] is that in all countries legitimisation debates overwhelmingly refer to 'the EU' (or 'the European project', etc.) as a whole, without distinguishing between specific institutions This undifferentiated character of the debates might be taken as an indication for limited political engagement with EU affairs: even in the élite forum of the media, speakers tend to discuss the EU as if it was a homogenous entity'.

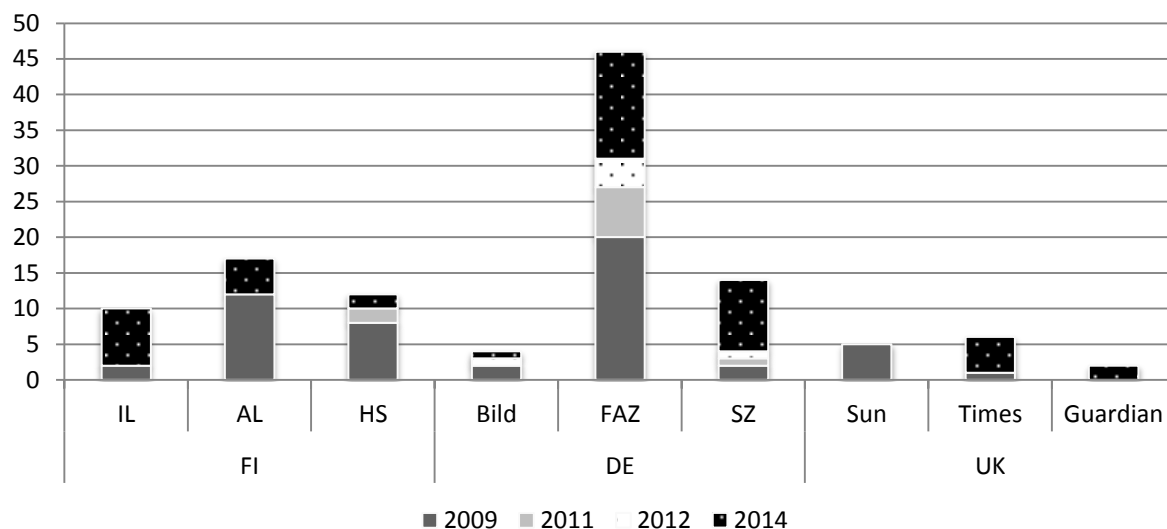
Hence, while looking into the discussion of a single institution instead of a whole regime naturally yields a lot less material, it seems a defining feature of a rather sweeping discourse of the EU's legitimacy in which the whole project is preferred to individual institutions.

Conclusions based on a small sample like the one at hand necessarily have to be preliminary and need to be investigated in more detail. All results presented in the remainder of this

section, therefore, are tentative. They are still interesting for the study at hand because they give, for the first time, explicit insights to the actual discussion about the EP's legitimacy in the news.

Given the high level of coverage in Germany, it is not surprising, that most statements were found there whereas the amount is lowest in the UK (see also Hurrelmann et al., 2009, 2012; Beetz, 2015). However, it seems that at least the German conservative newspaper is engaging a lot more in a discussion about the EP's legitimacy than other papers in the country.

Figure 18: Absolute Number of Legitimation Statements by Newspaper and Year



Calculating the percentage of statements in articles shows the overall low share of the discussion about the EP's legitimacy in reporting about it. In addition, computing the percentage of positive statements in all statements by year and country (e.g., Hurrelmann et al., 2009, 2012) shows the high level of negativity in the discourse (see Table 13), especially in the UK. The Finnish papers seem to be rather balanced over the years in their assessments of the EP's standing while Germany occupies a middle position.

Interestingly, the German tabloid is the 'friendliest' of all papers in the sample whereas other tabloids are rather negative towards the EP. Conservative newspapers are overall

found to promote a more positive attitude towards the EP's legitimacy than liberals – although the difference is minimal for the British case.

Zooming in on the quality of statements more closely, the majority is made about the EP as an institution, followed by individual MEPs. A much lower number of statements deal with groupings of MEPs (e.g., party groups; see Figure 19). The institution of the EP gets most negative statements whereas most positive statements are made about individual MEPs (see appendix Table A5 for detailed results).

Table 13: Percentage of Legitimation Statements in All Articles and Share of Positive Statements in All Statements

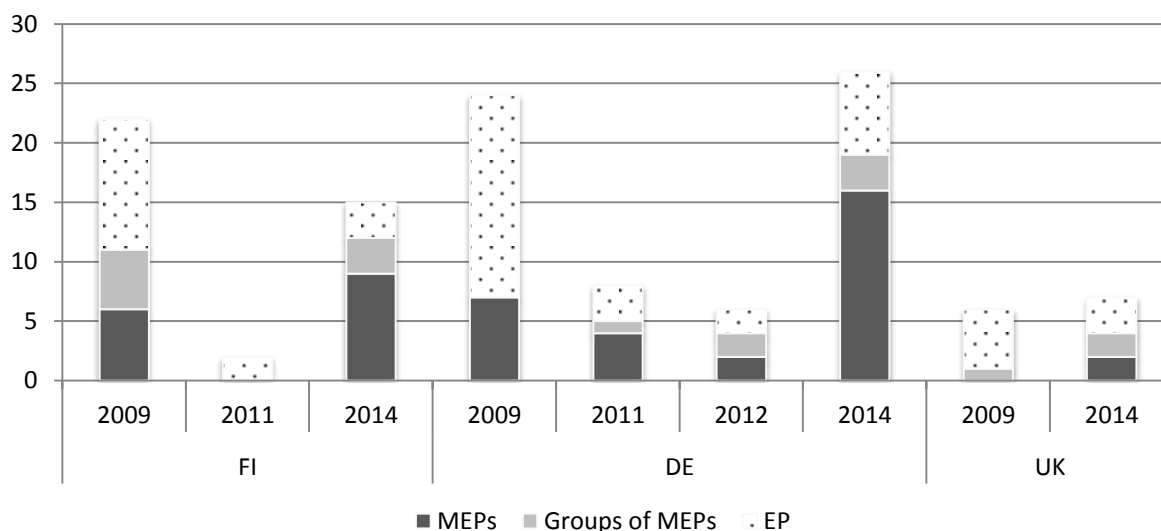
	2009		2011		2012		2014		Total	
	Share	+/All	Share	+/All	Share	+/All	Share	+/All	Share	+/All
Tab.	4%	50%	0%	None	0%	None	19%	13%	9%	20%
Cons.	13%	50%	0%	None	0%	None	9%	80%	10%	59%
Lib.	6%	63%	12%	0%	0%	None	3%	100%	5%	58%
FI	8%	55%	5%	0%	0%	None	9%	47%	8%	49%
Tab.	13%	100%	0%	None	33%	100%	5%	100%	9%	100%
Cons.	15%	50%	19%	14%	12%	50%	9%	13%	13%	33%
Lib.	2%	0%	4%	0%	4%	0%	8%	30%	5%	21%
DE	10%	50%	11%	13%	9%	50%	8%	23%	9%	34%
Tab.	12%	0%	None	None	None	None	0%	None	6%	0%
Cons.	1%	0%	None	None	None	None	7%	20%	4%	17%
Lib.	0%	None	None	None	0%	None	4%	0%	2%	0%
UK	3%	0%	None	None	0%	None	4%	14%	4%	8%
Total	7%	46%	9%	10%	6%	50%	7%	29%	7%	36%

As discussed earlier, it is difficult to empirically disentangle specific from diffuse support (Bellucci and Memoli, 2012; Easton, 1975). Individual institutions seem to be built on specific rather than diffuse support and individuals with defined functions within the institutional order even more so. Given the rather even share of individual and institutional evaluations, we should see legitimacy statements about the EP or connected actors as a mixture of how the daily performance of MEPs, party groups and the EP is perceived in public in terms of specific support and how the institution as such or the principle of parliamentary representation is supported more broadly.

Most of the statements are given by non-EP actors about the EP as opposed to MEPs evaluating themselves: other MEPs, party groups or the EP as an institution. The tone is more negative for the latter category and more balanced for the first; however, given the extremely small amount of statements of self-evaluation (EP actor about EP actor; N=15), it is difficult to reach any if even preliminary conclusions (see appendix Figure A5) in this category.

Non-EP actors that evaluate the EP are mainly journalists but also domestic political actors such as members of the government or national MPs. It seems, thus, that the actors that engage in a discussion about the EP's legitimacy in the media are usually newsmakers themselves. This is a finding that others yielded as well (Beetz, 2015; Hurrelmann et al., 2009, 2012; see appendix Figure A6).

Figure 19: Objects of Legitimation



Regarding underlying justifications and their rather unsatisfactory reliability scores, we illustrate findings more descriptively by giving some examples of the most coded justifications in the following (see appendix Table A2 for an overview of findings regarding justifications).

Statements are often relating to transparency, addressing how the EP is too far away, not present enough in the media or incomprehensible for its voters. The more conservative Finnish Aamulehti, for example, writes about the 'absurd' EU legislation and representatives promoting it:

'It is not surprising if EU scepticism is deeply embedded in people's minds in Finland. MEPs who advocate such absurd directives discredit the whole EU because people's sense of justice does not match this kind of game'.⁸

Explanations are sometimes quite elaborate and reflective of intellectual discussions; in German coverage, established intellectuals write guest commentaries or are interviewed like, for example, Jürgen Habermas.⁹ In a response to that specific interview, the Brussels correspondent of the more conservative German Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung harshly criticises the philosopher lamenting that his ideas of a strong EP are built on unrealistic claims:

'To date, the EU is missing one decisive thing: A Europe-wide public debate about the contents of legislative enterprises. This does not take place because there is no European public – because of language barriers, but also because of cultural disparities. As long as this does not change the legitimation of EU decision-making and thereby the legitimation of the European Parliament will be limited'.¹⁰

Some explain how exotic the EP is in comparison to national conventions and traditions which is a finding yielded by Gattermann (2011, 2013), too. In connection with this, some statements also highlight the perceived possible dangers of a strong EP. The Finnish Tabloid Newspaper Iltasanomat, for example, writes that

'Euro-elections are not structured in the same way as domestic parliamentary elections in Member States because the setup in the European Parliament is not government against opposition. It is in this sense not a proper parliament at all, but only elected by citizens to counterweight the European

⁸ 'Ei ihme, jos EU-kriittisyys on piintynyt syvään Suomen kansaan. Mepit, jotka kannattavat tällaisia järjettömiä direktiivejä, tekevät nimenomaan hallaa koko EU:lle, koska kansan oikeustaju ei hyväksy tällaista peliä'. Aamulehti, 30.5.2009: 'Suomelle isänmaalaisia Meppejä' ('Patriotic MEPs for Finland').

⁹ Note that the interview by Jürgen Habermas (FAZ, 30.5.2014: 'Europa wird direkt ins Herz getroffen' ('Europe is ripped into its heart')) was not coded for our data collection since we only included every second day for election periods.

¹⁰ '... dass der EU bis auf weiteres etwas Entscheidendes fehlt: eine europaweite öffentliche Debatte über die Inhalte eines Gesetzesvorhabens. Sie findet nicht statt, weil es - nicht nur wegen der Sprachbarrieren, sondern auch wegen kultureller Unterschiede - keine europäische Öffentlichkeit gibt. Solange das so bleibt, wird die Legitimation der EU-Gesetzgebung und damit des Europaparlaments an ihre Grenzen stoßen'. Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 2.6.2014: 'Europa's Herz schlägt anderswo' ('Europe's heart beats elsewhere').

Commission which is elected by politicians and not by citizens. Parliament's powers were increased with the Treaty of Lisbon, but additional power is also a thorn in some Member States' sides. The ones dreading the 'devil of federalism' are afraid that a strong European Parliament together with the Commission could narrow governments', i.e. member states', possibilities in decision-making'.¹¹

The increase of institutional strength of the EP – the effectiveness of its involvement in the EU's legislative processes – is also addressed in positive statements; some of them are connected to more general appeals to go and vote – an interesting example in this respect is the German Bild Zeitung that actively promoted the relevance of elections with the help of celebrities in an 'election pact' in 2014. In fact, however, there are very few Bild statements coded. But still, in contrast to its otherwise more Eurosceptic stance – as already discussed earlier, the Bild Zeitung endorsed the EP as a guardian of peace and stability in Europe. For example, a cardinal is quoted as follows:

'We have achieved a lot already on our way to a united and peaceful Europe. Therefore I will strengthen the powers in the European Parliament that strive to further pursue this goal'.¹²

Many statements focus on personal characteristics of MEPs, evaluating them as charismatic or popular leaders. A positive example from the more liberal German SZ for illustration:

'And although this is anything but simple, although almost all trends currently speak against the party [the FDP, O.E], here he stands, in his great, wide-swinging Loden coat, with a friendly smile on his face: Lambsdorff is a pretty friendly person in general. He became famous mainly because he is the nephew of Otto Count Lambsdorff. He was trained as a diplomat but has been an MEP for ten years now and has earned his degree in the EP. Not because of being loud like Guido Westerwelle. Lambsdorff is a calm and thoughtful type. This alone already distinguishes him from those in the FDP that led the party into their biggest election fiasco last year'.¹³

¹¹ 'Eurovaalien teema ei jäsenny jäsenmaiden parlamenttivaaliteeman tapaan, sillä Euroopan parlamentissa ei ole hallitus vastaan oppositio-asettelma. Se ei siinä mielessä ole oikea parlamentti lainkaan, vaan vain kansalaisten valitsema vastapaino komissiolle, joka on poliitikkojen eikä kansalaisten valitsema. Parlamentin valtaa on Lissabonin sopimuksella lisätty, mutta lisävaltaa on jäsenmaissa myös kavahtettu. Liitovaltiopirua seinälle maalaavat pelkäävät komission ja vahvan parlamentin yhteispelin kaventavan hallitusten välisen, jäsenmaihiin tukeutuvan päätöksenteon mahdollisuuksia'. Iltasanomat, 19.5.2014: 'Eurovaali-into ei ota syttyäkseen' ('EP election enthusiasm does not ignite').

¹² 'Wir haben schon viel erreicht auf dem Weg zu einem geeinten und friedlichen Europa. Deshalb werde ich mit meiner Stimme die Kräfte im Europaparlament stärken, die sich für dieses Ziel einsetzen'. Bild Zeitung, 21.5.2014: 'Der große BILD-Wahl-Pakt mit Kardinal Woelki und Bonnie Strange; Halleluja, Europa!' (The big BILD-election-pact with Cardinal Woelki and Bonnie Strange: Hallelujah Europe!').

¹³ 'Doch obwohl das alles andere als einfach ist, obwohl fast alle Trends derzeit gegen die Partei sprechen, steht er hier, in seinem großen, weit schwingenden Lodenmantel, und lächelt freundlich. So wie Lambsdorff auch sonst ein ziemlich freundlicher Mensch ist. Bekannt wurde er vor allem, weil er der Neffe von Otto Graf Lambsdorff ist. Ausgebildet wurde er als Diplomat. Aber nun sitzt er schon seit zehn Jahren im Europaparlament und hat sich dort einen Namen erarbeitet. Und das nicht, weil er ein Lautsprecher à la

Similarly, the more liberal Finnish HS writes about the UKIP leader Nigel Farage:

‘The EU- and immigration critical UKIP party has long been a one-man show: The British party is led by the charismatic MEP Nigel Farage’.¹⁴

Some statements deal with how Eurosceptics do not pursue a conciliatory style of politics and highlight intra-parliamentary quarrels and political contestation between party groups. In this respect, the more conservative British Times for example publishes:

‘Ms Le Pen's blocking pledges were brushed off by members of the big centre-left and centre-right groups, which still dominate the parliament. The power of the anti-EU blocs would remain "very weak", said Henri Weber, a senior French Socialist MEP’.

Another example from the more conservative Finnish Aamulehti:

‘According to the speaker of the European Peoples’ Party Group, Joseph Daul, the fragmented nature of political interests in the EP demands new approaches of dealing with it, too. ‘It is a fact that 1/7 MEPs represent groups with which one cannot negotiate whatsoever. We have to assess the political game completely anew’.¹⁵

Given the small number of statements it seems difficult to identify any kind of pattern that would be more dominant than others. It appears, however, that justifications relate to the input legitimacy of the EP more than its output; this could mirror our earlier discussion that extended competencies of the EP cannot compensate for the fact that it is still far away and difficult to understand for the citizens that it represents.

5.3 Results and Conclusions

Overall, EP coverage roughly follows the same patterns identified for coverage of the EU as such and mostly confirms our expectations. There is indeed more coverage in election

Westerwelle wäre. Er ist ein unaufgeregter, nachdenklicher Typ. Das allein schon unterscheidet ihn von jenen, die im vergangenen Jahr die FDP in ihr größtes Wahldebakel geführt haben’. Süddeutsche Zeitung, 19.5.2014: ‚Freundlich im Regen stehen‘ (‚Standing in the rain with a friendly face’).

¹⁴ ‘EU- ja maahanmuuttokriittinen Ukip on pitkään ollut yhden miehen show: brittipuoluetta johtaa karismaattinen europarlamentaarikko Nigel Farage’. Helsingin Sanomat, 23.5.2014: ‚Oikean laidan puolueet Euroopassa ovat kirjava ja eripurainen joukko‘ (‚The right wing parties in Europe are a variegated and discordant set’).

¹⁵ ‘EPP:n puheenjohtajan Joseph Daulin mukaan hajanaisuus vaatii uusia toimintapoja myös parlamentin sisällä. - On tosiasia, että nyt mepeistä 1/7 edustaa ryhmää, jonka kanssa ei voi neuvotella lainkaan. Meidän on mietittävä poliittinen peli kokonaan uusiksi’. Aamulehti, 9.6.2009: ‘Pirstaloitunut parlamentti on vaikea kumppani’ (‘A fragmented parliament is a difficult partner’).

periods than in routine times (H_{1-B}), also the established finding concerning differences between tabloids and quality newspapers is confirmed (H_{1-C}). Concerning H_{1-B} and H_{2-A} , we find that election coverage is strongly biased by a national angle which, in the end, reduces the differences between routine and election periods to a considerable extent (H_{1-B}), but confirms our hypothesis on the prevalence of the national perspective (H_{2-A}). The financial crisis is found a dominant topic considering the large amount of articles discussing financial policies (H_{2-B}); mostly, however, no policies are discussed. Instead, reporting about raw politics is the rule rather than the exception. Furthermore, considering the tone of EP evaluations, also in legitimacy statements, there is a bias towards negativity which confirms hypothesis H_3 . Interestingly, the German tabloid, usually known as being rather Eurosceptic, seems to be mostly positive towards the EP.

Our hypothesis that EP news visibility increases over time (H_{1-A}) is not confirmed for all countries in our sample which neatly ties into our expectation of national differences in coverage (H_4). In fact, national developments play a great role: Coverage in Finland is higher in 2009 because of the success of the Finns Party but decreases in 2014. Also EP news relating to other member states' or genuine EU level EP coverage is more or less prominent in papers across the sample. Here, Germany is found to be most Europeanised, both vertically and horizontally.

In sum, the impression of the EP as a second order parliament is confirmed: Looking at the rather small amount of legitimacy statements found, the framing of the EP is very faint in reporting about it. In addition, our identified clusters show that reporting of the EP has a strong national bias. Election news corroborates this bias to a great extent which leads us to the conclusion that while elections increase coverage, they do not necessarily increase the visibility of the EP itself. Adding the high level of neutral or ambivalent news to this impression yields a portrayal of an institution that is not the immediate focus of attention or an outstanding topic of a polarised discussion.

Judging from the results of earlier research (Hurrelmann et al., 2012) the discussion of the EP may be pushed in the background by a focus on the EU as a whole and a rather

undifferentiated discourse. As discussed earlier, another difficulty may be the fact that the EP is a second order parliament that is competing with national parliaments when it comes to the favour of their electorate – and maybe also journalists'. This question is tackled in the following chapter in which we look at how effective the EP's efforts are in becoming visible in the news compared to first order – national – parliaments in the EU.

6 How Do Parliaments in the EU Influence Each Other Regarding Their Visibility in Newspapers?

This chapter assesses our second research question as to *how parliaments in the EU influence each other with regard to their visibility in newspapers*. As we have argued earlier, the discussion about the EP and the democratic deficit has also led to a stronger focus on what national parliaments can contribute to the legitimization of EU politics. Against this background it is of key importance to understand how the two levels manage to become visible in the news to comparatively assess their legitimising potential for EU politics and which of the two levels has greater chances of reaching citizens and potentially contribute to a greater acceptance of the EU in public. Ideally, such an analysis would have to include data on the tone of coverage as well. However, due to an insufficient amount of data, we limit this analysis to parliaments' visibility leaving further steps to future research.

6.1 Expectations

To develop a framework for the comparative analysis of parliaments' visibility in the news, we trace the general discussion on the multilevel system of parliamentary representation highlighting the complementary, competitive and co-operative nature of parliamentary interaction. We assume that these patterns of interaction may underlie journalists' perceptions when evaluating parliaments as news items since interparliamentary relationships are believed to be stored as predispositions in the form of frames in the journalists' belief system. We identify the general form of such relations from the literature

dealing with the institutional developments of parliaments in the EU without defining an evaluation. We explore the evaluations mirrored in the results of our analysis in terms of higher or lower visibility and the direct or mutual influences of parliamentary activities.

Re-connecting to our analytical framework, coverage of interparliamentary relations is seen as the result of the journalists' cognitive processing of external stimuli regarding parliaments in the EU (first stage of decision-making). This processing, as discussed earlier, is heavily influenced by journalists' cognitive predispositions functioning as a coping mechanism in the selection of news items. News values such as relevance or power influence this selection but are eventually subjective benchmarks. In her decision to cover one parliament or the other more or less, the journalist needs to respect the editorial line which is guarded by the editor, needs access to relevant sources, and needs to deliver a timely and competitive product that satisfies the audience's interest. The viable alternatives that the first stage of decision-making yields, then, concern possible ways in which parliaments in the EU are made visible in relation to each other or not (second stage of decision-making).

Lacking data on the cognitive predispositions of journalists, we include the outlet as a mirror of earlier decisions the newsmaker has made in his striving for economic and political self-enhancement. In this respect, tabloids, for example, are found to follow an editorial path of covering political topics to a much lesser degree (e.g., Boomgaarden et al., 2013). In terms of visibility, therefore, the outlet may be expected to make a greater difference than ideological stances of newspapers, for example. In addition, acknowledging the contingency of reality as such, we check the impact of real life events or salient topics, in addition to parliamentary activities, that may possibly influence journalists' agenda and coverage about parliaments in the EU.

6.1.1 The EP and NPs as Complementary Legislative Branches in EU Politics

Some studies elaborate on how the EP and NPs complement each other in EU politics in a sense of dividing tasks between different parliamentary branches (e.g., Maurer 2009). Looking into Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), Wouters and Raube (2012), for example, point out that the EP has greater possibilities to investigate cross sectional policy

issues (Wouters and Raube, 2012: 160) since it can access information touching upon different supranational policies more easily at EU level; NPs, in turn, decide over the national defence budget and can hold national executive actors accountable in CSDP more effectively. Also regarding other EU policies, the EP and NPs fulfil very different tasks and therefore usually become active at different points in the EU's legislative cycle. Journalists would then be expected to portray parliaments and their activities quite independently from each other which allows us to draw on studies dealing with the general visibility of parliaments in the news.

As discussed earlier, research on the EP in the media is rather limited (Gattermann, 2011, 2013; Gattermann and Vasilipoulou, 2015). In addition, also research on the visibility of national parliaments in EU affairs remains quite scarce until now. While parliaments' newsworthiness seems to have decreased over time (Negrine 1999), their efforts to become visible increased with the financial crisis and so has news coverage of the EU (Michailidou and Trenz, 2010; Monza and Anduiza, 2016; also Kaiser and Kleinen-von KönigsLöw, 2016). Thus, greater efforts and an increased newsworthiness of EU issues could be mirrored in greater visibility of parliaments in the EU.

Accordingly, empirical studies focussing on the mirroring of individual political actors' activities in the news (Vos 2014) and parliamentary activities as such (Auel et al., 2015a; Gattermann, 2011; Rozenberg et al., 2011; Van Santen et al., 2015) find a positive influence of greater public visibility on coverage. Some studies suggest a more ambiguous influence (e.g., Gattermann and Vasilopoulou, 2015; Midtbo, 2011), but there is evidence lending support to the expectation that more efforts to become visible are rewarded by newsmakers. Summing up, assuming that newsmakers perceive and depict parliaments as independent links in the EU's legislative chain, they can, independently from each other, be expected to increase coverage with their activities.

H_{5-A}: The more active the European Parliament is, the more visible it is in press coverage.

H_{5-B}: The more active the national parliament is in EU affairs, the more visible it is in press coverage.

Regarding a direct comparison of parliaments, Crum states that ‘the European Parliament ... has come to style itself more and more on the example of national parliaments’ (Crum, 2005: 453). Gattermann finds this statement reflected in journalists’ portrayals of the EP. She concludes that the EU’s parliament in the media is usually depicted in a manner facilitating (domestic) audience understanding, namely by presenting it as a parliament that follows the national tradition:

‘It is due to the distinct experience with the national parliamentary tradition that correspondents have difficulties in presenting the EP in a way that is understandable for their readers. The EP is different from its national counterparts. Correspondents are aware of that and do in fact draw comparisons to the national parliamentary culture to make it more perceptible for their readers’ (Gattermann, 2011: 219).

Thus, the national parliamentary culture is found to act as journalists’ implicit proxy to explain the EP. However, these findings are not conclusive about what kind of effects could be expected. In the following, we formulate hypotheses based on the assumption that, if newsmakers perceive both parliamentary levels in a competitive or co-operative way, activities could cause mutual effects in that activities of one parliament would, positively or negatively, influence the visibility of the other. Acknowledging the different tasks and functions that parliaments at both levels fulfil (e.g., Wouters and Raube, 2012), however, we formulate these hypotheses not as contradictory to H_{5A+B} but rather as a qualification of it, perceiving mutual effects as potentially occurring in addition to independent ones.

6.1.2 Parliaments as Co-Operators

On the one hand, contributions on interparliamentary relationships highlight their co-operative nature. Looking at both, horizontal (amongst NPs) and vertical (EP-NPs) interaction, there is often a positive normative tenor that emphasises synergy effects of interparliamentary co-operation concerning policy influence, the reduction of information asymmetries, the exchange of best practices, expertise and an enhancement of parliamentary power balancing the executive in the EU (Crum and Fossum, 2009; Miklin and Crum, 2011; Raunio, 2000). With regard to the particular aspect of the visibility of the EU’s parliaments’ relationships, some contributions stress the possible enhancement of mutual

understanding and stronger prominence of Europe by interparliamentary cooperation (Kraft-Kasack, 2008; Wagner, 2013).

In fact, there are many different forms of vertical interparliamentary co-operation in the EU ranging from formalised interparliamentary networks such as COSAC (Conference of the European Affairs Committees of NPs and the EP) to informal visits of parliamentary delegations or speakers. In addition, in some countries, MEPs regularly engage in committee meetings or even the plenary of their national parliament (Valentin, 2016); in turn, most NPs have own offices in the EP or close by (Neuhold and Högenauer, 2016; see Hefftler and Gattermann, 2015 for an extensive overview). Some political groups organise their own conferences at EU level and the Green parties have been found to even closely co-ordinate their policy positions (Miklin, 2013).

Against this broader background, also journalists may perceive both parliamentary levels as an intertwined network of relevant actors, e.g. as equally informed, non-executive experts on EU topics that can be asked for their opinions, no matter at which level EU politics was debated. Concerning mutual effects, then, activities could increase attention for the other parliament as well; thus, in contrast to H_{5A+B} formulated above, we would assume the occurrence of mutual positive effects, either alone or in addition to independent effects of activities on coverage of the respective active parliament. Accordingly, the expectation would be that

H₆: the more active one parliament (in EU affairs), the more visible the other in newspaper coverage.

6.1.3 Parliaments as Competitors

On the other hand, however, scholars point out the potential for competition in the relationship of the EP and national parliaments and give empirical accounts of its emergence (Raunio, 2009; Kiiver, 2006; Neunreither, 2005; also Winzen et al., 2014): National parliaments might see their own powers and capabilities – and ultimately the sovereignty of the nation state – undermined by the EP or also interparliamentary networks as such (Wouters and Raube, 2012: 155). Illustrating this, Herranz-Surrallés finds that NPs are in

opposition of a strong EP in Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) (Herranz-Surrallés, 2014); also Winzen et al. (2014) suggest a similar dynamic with strong NPs opposing a (further) empowerment of the EP (see also Gattermann 2013). NPs' fears to lose competencies are also connected to the perceived self-empowerment of the EP and the fact that governments feel the need to democratise the EU by strengthening the EP's status (Hix and Hoyland, 2013; Rittberger, 2005).

In accordance with this, journalists may perceive and picture the EP and national parliaments in a more competitive fashion. Regarding parliaments' comparative newsworthiness, the NP may overtake the EP in terms of proximity or relevance for the (domestic) audience, judging from voter turnout in elections (e.g., Hix and Marsh, 2007; Schmitt and Toygür, 2016). In a similar vein, the NP might be seen as a powerful and more effective scrutinizer of the national executive in EU politics (e.g., Auel et al., 2015b, 2015c) making another parliament at EU level obsolete.

The EP, in turn, could be seen as an equally powerful legislative player on a par with other EU institutions that can influence EU legislation more directly (Gattermann, 2011: 133). It may be perceived as stronger and more influential than the NP in EU affairs on a larger scale (Crum and Fossum, 2009: 253). Inferring that perceived more relevant activities of one parliament could push the other parliament in the background, the competitive nature of parliamentary relationships could be expressed in negative influences of activities on coverage of the other parliament. Again, relating to H_{5A+B} , we assume negative effects on coverage of the perceived rivalling parliament – alone or in addition to independent effects of activities on coverage of the respective active parliament. The expectation in this case, then, would be that

H₇: the more active one parliament (in EU affairs), the less visible the other parliament is in newspaper coverage.

6.2 Linking Parliamentary Activities and Newspaper Visibility

Turning to methodological implications, the chapter builds on a merged dataset of EP data and data on newspaper coverage of national parliaments in EU affairs collected in the PACE project. As elaborated earlier for EP data, also the PACE dataset is based on an extensive content analysis of newspaper articles conducted by human coders. Articles are manually selected on the basis of terms describing the domestic parliament, its party groups and MPs in connection with EU topics including the financial crisis. They are selected if they deal with NPs in EU affairs to a substantial degree: If articles only mention parliaments very briefly, thus only peppered in (flash; see chapter 4.2 for an elaboration for EP data), they are not included in the analysis since they do not present substantive parliamentary news.

The sample comprises every day of weeks 20-25 in 2011 and 2012. It includes articles mentioning the domestic parliament in EU affairs and/or the EP. The data is aggregated at a daily level for each of the nine included newspapers. Data on parliamentary activities is lagged (t-1) to connect it with coverage; we look at daily newspapers, which follow the routine of a 24 hours news cycle. Other time lags were checked but not found to provide more convincing explanations of coverage. Thus, taking the day within one newspaper as the unit of analysis, observations amount to a total of $N=648^{16}$. In sum, the analysis measures the influence of parliamentary EU activities of one day on the amount of articles about parliaments in the EU on the next day in nine different papers across three countries included.

Due to an over-dispersion of data, absolute numbers of articles are analysed using a negative binomial regression model. To account for group specific influences, dummy variables are included for countries and outlets. Outlets are included against the background that empirical studies have shown greatest differences between outlets (e.g., Boomgaarden et al., 2013). Since the analysis is designed to also detect possible mutual effects of parliamentary communication on news visibility, models always include activities of both

¹⁶ That is 6 (days) multiplied by 6 (weeks) multiplied by 2 (years) multiplied by 3 (countries) multiplied by 3 (newspapers).

levels. In this vein, the activities of one or the other parliamentary level also serve as a control variable with the occurrence of mutual effects.

Dependent Variable

Dependent variables are defined by (1) the absolute number of EP articles and (2) the absolute number of articles on NPs in EU affairs aggregated at the daily level within one newspaper in one country. A very first look at the data revealed that parliaments did not feature in articles together very often: Only a negligible share of 1,5% deals with both parliaments simultaneously. Therefore, they are counted double: Once as EP news and once as NP news. They are, thus, not considered as a distinct category in the analysis.

Independent Variables

Independent variables comprise debates, (written and oral) questions and press releases as the most important public activities of parliamentarians and parliaments in terms of their amount and in terms of their potential to make parliamentary work visible (see Auel et al., 2016 for a similar design). It is argued that these activities serve the purpose to act as a proxy for parliaments' efforts to become visible in public and make EU politics transparent for citizens. They are rather easily comparable for all parliaments under study and cover different periods of time; debates and questions are part of official legislative proceedings whereas press releases are not (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996: 123). Accordingly, parliamentary debates and questions serve as measures of how political contestants in the parliamentary arena make EU politics visible. Especially debates 'are vital elements of electoral competition as they provide for a public articulation of societal interests and the discussion of policies, thus informing citizens about complex political issues' (Auel and Raunio, 2014a: 13). Debates happen only when parliament is sitting whereas at least written questions can be published continuously.

Press releases, in contrast, present a tool specifically designed to cater to the media's needs and can be issued on a continuous basis. Issuing press releases is seen as an attempt to influence the news agenda (Kioussis et al., 2006: 266) – and thus an active effort by parliament to focus media attention on its activities. In addition, while the levels of public

legislative activities are expected to differ greatly, press releases are expected to be more comparable in how parliaments' employ them. For this reason they offer a straightforward way to check the robustness of our results and, at the same time, understand the influences caused by the diversity of legislative traditions. The UK House of Commons, for example, is known for employing the instrument of questioning to a much greater extent than other parliaments (e.g., Rozenberg et al., 2011). In contrast, the Finnish Eduskunta as a classic working parliament with strong scrutiny rights has been found to discuss behind closed doors rather than publicly (Auel and Raunio, 2014a).

Since press releases often cover what happens in parliament, it is not surprising to find a comparably high correlation between press releases and debates (see appendix Table A3 for correlation matrix). For this reason, legislative and media activities are tested in separate models. Data on EP activities is retrieved from the EP's online archives whereas data on parliamentary activities of NPs in EU affairs is collected in the context of the PACE project and the OPAL project (Auel et al., 2016; Auel et al., 2015a, 2015b). Press releases comprise only those issued by the institution of parliament, not individual groups or M(E)Ps. Both variables are count data indicating the amount of e.g., debates on one day. The variable on EP activities has the same values over countries while the variable on NP activities indicates the respective parliament's activity only. Hence, models always compare the EP with one country's parliament in the same country's newspapers: for example the Bundestag with the EP in German newspapers.

Control Variables

Due to the high salience of the European crisis, a control variable used for contextualising results indicates if articles deal with financial matters or not. It is coded as 1=yes if the article focusses on financial issues such as the debt crisis, either entirely or as one topic amongst others.

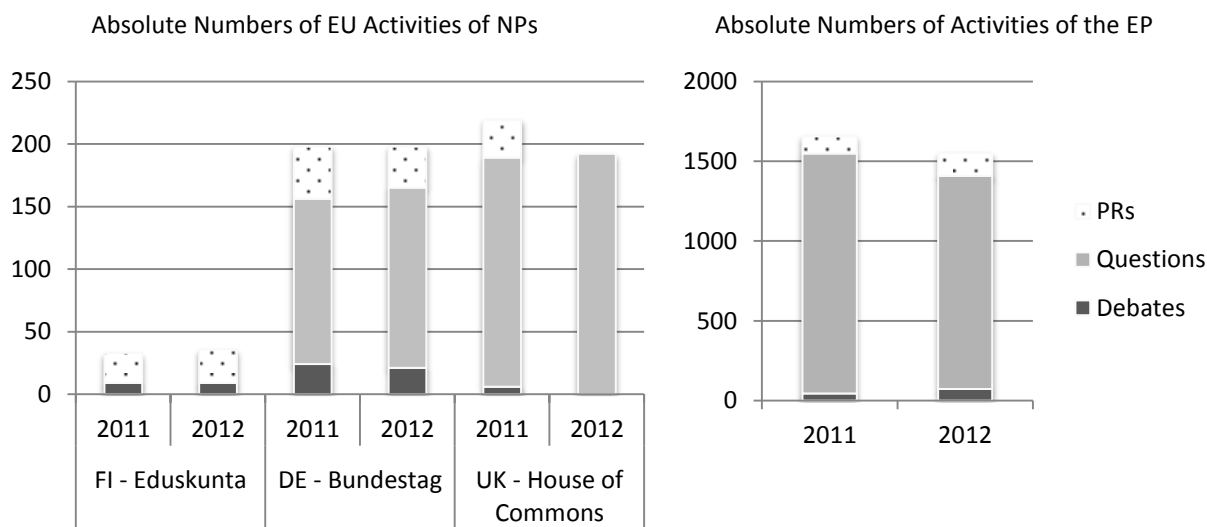
In a similar vein, we use a dummy variable controlling for the influence of extra-parliamentary crisis events for our robustness checks. It includes important dates (=1) as

listed by the European Commission (European Commission, 2016). The original variable is lagged (t-1) in accordance with the time lag included for parliamentary activities.

6.3 Results and Conclusions

Looking at descriptive results concerning activities, it does not come as a surprise that the numbers for EP activities are much higher than for each NP respectively since it works exclusively on EU matters. Concerning debates and questions of NPs (see Figure 20; see appendix Table A4 for descriptive statistics), the German Bundestag ranks at the middle position, the House of Commons is found to debate EU affairs to a low degree while typically employing the instrument of questioning to a large extent. As expected, the Finnish Eduskunta's publicly visible activities are found to be very low in number¹⁷ (see also Auel and Raunio, 2014a). Press releases, in comparison, show a more homogenous picture across all three parliaments.

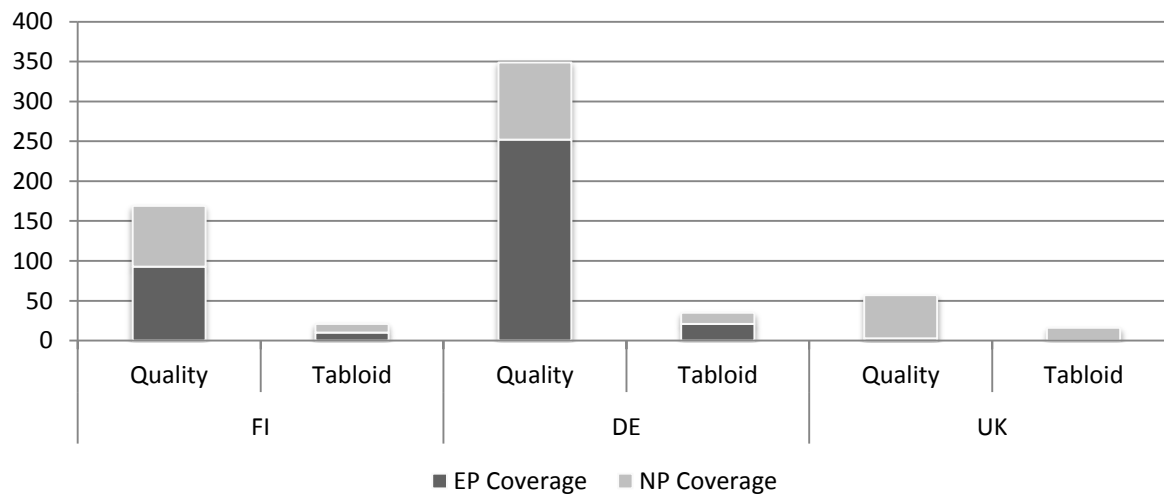
Figure 20: Absolute Numbers of EU Activities of National Parliaments and the European Parliament



¹⁷ Note that after the parliamentary elections in Finland 2011, it took until the end of June for a government to be formed. This means that during our period of investigation, there was a 'caretaker' government in place which could potentially bias our results. However, as the results shown in Auel (2015) suggest, public activities of the Eduskunta are found to be extremely low in number in general. Also the comparison with activities in 2012 shows that the number of activities is not deviating from other periods.

Regarding the absolute numbers of newspaper articles (see Figure 21; see appendix table A5 for descriptive statistics), German newspapers are found to produce more news than the Finnish with the UK virtually ignoring the EP as a topic. These country-specific findings are mirrored in the literature analysing EP and EU-related coverage, too (e.g., Gattermann, 2011, 2013; Strömbäck et al., 2011).

Figure 21: Absolute Numbers of EP and NP Newspaper Articles



The EP is clearly covered more often than the German Bundestag in EU affairs, while news articles on the Finnish Eduskunta and the EP are shared rather evenly in the period under investigation. As mentioned earlier, articles covering both parliamentary levels together are not prominent in coverage at all. In line with the academic state of the art and our earlier discussed results on EP coverage only, tabloids cover parliaments in the EU significantly less than quality outlets (e.g., Boomgaarden et al., 2013).

Turning to the negative binomial regression analysis (see Table 14) results show a positive, significant relationship for EP debates and EP press releases on EP articles and for NP debates on NP articles independently (H_{5-A+B}). Questions, in contrast, do not play a role at all.

With regard to mutual influences, the analysis shows a significant positive effect of EP debates and EP press releases on the coverage of NPs in EU affairs. It seems, thus, that the EP can raise awareness for domestic parliamentary EU affairs as well as itself while the

analysis does not show NPs' activities to affect EP coverage accordingly. This seems to support H₆ (mutual positive effects), for the EP at least, while there is no evidence supporting the assumption that journalists may perceive the two parliamentary levels as competitors (H₇).

Country-specific differences are more pronounced regarding EP coverage judging from the fact that country dummies have a (more) significant effect in EP models. Another interesting result is the difference in the explained variance of models (pseudo r²) which is around 20% for EP articles and only 4-5% for NP articles. Thus, while models are comparable in the variables used, they are clearly not when it comes to their explanatory power. This seems to indicate that explanations for NP coverage must also be investigated outside the actual parliamentary context. It also highlights the importance for the EP to be publicly visible. Also robustness checks yield very similar results in this respect.¹⁸

Given the importance of the crisis, it is deemed important to check if articles discuss financial policies. In NP coverage an overwhelming majority of cases (around 75%) deal with financial topics. Similar results for a period of four years (2010-2013) are found in other studies, too (see Auel et al., 2015a). For EP coverage, in turn, the percentage is much lower, at 28%. Therefore, we include a variable comprising important crisis dates as listed by the Commission which however does not have any effect and does not change our results. Thus, while the crisis has a great influence, it still appears to be country-specific. Parliamentary activities remain an important explanation for coverage.

Furthermore, 'given the wide range of variation among national parliaments in the EU, the division of roles with the EP is likely to vary from one state to another' (Crum and Fossum 2009: 253). We therefore also test the influence of individual countries in the sample. For that purpose, a jack-knife test is conducted leaving out one country in turn (see Table 15 and

¹⁸ To check the robustness of our pooled model, as a first check, articles that covered the EP or the NP as a main topic were used as dependent variable. Reliability measures for this variable for PACE data range from 0.81 – 0.88 (Holsti coefficients tested in county teams).

Moreover, two logistic regression models were estimated for each parliamentary level separately which measured the influence of activities on 0 = no EP or NP coverage, and 1 = EP or NP coverage on that day (see appendix Tables A9-11 for all results). In both tests, results were very similar to results presented here.

16 for results). Overall, press releases of national parliaments and parliamentary questions are still found to not play any role; moreover, tabloids still report significantly less in all countries. Press releases of the EP show a stable influence in all regressions on both types of parliamentary coverage. Their positive effect on EP coverage, however, seems to be due to the inclusion of German newspapers which reports most about the EP in terms of absolute numbers.

Looking into EP press releases more closely, they should be seen as a continuous supply of EU news: One press release, for example, deals with a comment by the EP president on Greek bailout politics.¹⁹ In that sense, press releases are EU news mirrored in EP news items that could explain coverage about European politics in general – i.e. of the EP and NPs in EU affairs in our case. NP press releases in contrast are found to usually be tailored and limited to the national context.²⁰

Regarding debates, EP debates significantly influence EP coverage in all three countries in the sample. The positive influence of EP debates on NP coverage, however, becomes significant only when including Finland. Given the high level of coverage on the Eduskunta compared to the low number of its publicly visible activities to account for it, this could be an indicator that the EP plenary is an arena or stage for salient EU events, such as question time with the Euro Commissioner or a speech by a head of government. Also Boomgaarden et al. (2010) find EP plenary sessions to increase coverage of EU politics. Such an event might then trigger news on the national parliament, e.g., by getting a comment by a national MP on the Commissioner's speech, without necessarily mentioning the EP as a mere 'platform' (also Gattermann, 2011: 13).

Given the very low number of activities, the proportionately high amount of articles, and the fact that the inclusion of Finnish data evokes mutual effects of EP debates on NP coverage, it seems important to check Finnish data in more detail. Coverage here is found to be almost

¹⁹ Press Release of the European Parliament of 23 May 2005: 'EP president Schulz: act now or risk Europe tearing apart'; accessible at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/20120521STO45447/ep-president-schulz-act-now-or-risk-europe-tearing-apart>; last accessed on 17 November 2016.

²⁰ This is also a result from qualitative interviews that were conducted in the context of the PACE project with the parliamentary communication services and press offices of party groups.

exclusively on financial matters, e.g. relating to actual national parliamentary activities, also discussing parliamentary actors' extra-parliamentary activities like interviews, for example. Also some EP debates focus on financial issues and are, for example, dedicated to drafting a position regarding an upcoming Eurosummit (e.g., 13.06.2012²¹). The EP plenary here is then a general stage to discuss salient EU topics and EP positions, but it is the issue itself which is relevant for the media, and not the EP. In sum, external events, and apparently the crisis as an 'omnipresent' issue in particular in this period, may act as triggers for both, parliamentary activities and coverage, which could explain the effects in our regression models.

Moreover, the influence of NP debates on NP coverage is significant only when including German papers. This seems to be connected to the fact that the Bundestag is the most active debater in our sample whereas the other two hardly debate EU topics in their plenaries during our period of investigation. While this seems a surprising finding for the House of Commons that we earlier introduced as the classic debating parliament, Huff and Smith (2015: 315) point out that due to the lack of public interest, EU topics are usually discussed in non-permanent issue-specific committees and are not referred to the plenary.

²¹ Reference number EP Debate: P7_CRE(2012)06-13 (6); accessible at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/debates-video.html>; last accessed on 17 November 2016.

Table 14: Effects of Legislative and Media Activities on All Articles Covering the EP or NPs in EU Affairs

	EP Coverage		NP Coverage	
	Legislative	Media	Legislative	Media
EP Debates	0.0923*** (0.0208)	--	0.0910*** (0.0258)	--
EP Questions	0.00159 (0.00215)	--	0.000144 (0.00265)	--
NP Debates	0.134 (0.0845)	--	0.394** (0.122)	--
NP Questions	-0.0248 (0.0311)	--	0.00380 (0.0291)	--
EP Press Rel.	--	0.0935*** (0.0161)	--	0.0810*** (0.0210)
NP Press Rel.	--	-0.126 (0.116)	--	-0.253 (0.165)
FI	3.476*** (0.592)	3.547*** (0.589)	0.111 (0.203)	0.179 (0.198)
DE	4.438*** (0.585)	4.504*** (0.584)	0.314 (0.192)	0.485* (0.193)
Tabloid	-1.704*** (0.199)	-1.695*** (0.197)	-0.985*** (0.193)	-0.985*** (0.194)
Constant	-4.151*** (0.592)	-4.307*** (0.584)	-1.060*** (0.194)	-1.148*** (0.172)
Overdispersion Parameter				
Constant	-1.164*** (0.326)	-1.326*** (0.373)	0.00483 (0.241)	0.108 (0.229)
Observations	630	630	630	630
Pseudo R^2	0.252	0.254	0.054	0.045
AIC	984.2	978.4	1040.9	1046.7

Standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; note that due to the inclusion of time lags, the number of observations is reduced by 18 (1 day per year and newspaper).

Eventually, NP debates are found a predictor of EP coverage ($p < 0.05$ when including Finland, $p < 0.1$ when excluding it) which is surprising given that this effect does not occur in our

pooled model (see Tables 15 and 16 for results). When estimating results for each country individually (see appendix Tables A4-6)²², significant effects are only observable for Finland, and not the other two. Thus, the findings of the jack-knife test, which is naturally based on a smaller dataset, might be biased due to low variance in the British sample.

Turning to the substantive size of effects, the average marginal effects of independent variables for our pooled model are largest for national debates (see appendix Figure A8 for marginal effects plots) but also show the greatest confidence intervals. This is most likely due to the diverse parliamentary traditions and debating cultures included in the comparably small sample that make a more precise prediction difficult. Plotting marginal effects of debates and press releases for EP and NP coverage separately (see Figures 22 and 23) mirrors results of our jack-knife test showing that NP debates seem to, if even minimally, influence EP coverage when the number of NP debates on a day is very low – as observed in the Finnish sample.

Summing up, results show a rather robust picture for our pooled model including all three countries. Zooming in on countries individually mirrors results to a great extent although variation is found. All in all, findings imply that structural differences between countries play a role. This concerns legislative traditions with their different approaches to publicity, but also differences in newspaper coverage. In line with similar research (e.g., Gattermann, 2013; Strömbäck et al., 2011), coverage in the UK, for example, is much lower than in Germany. Differences are also found between the influence of legislative and media activities at least at the national level where press releases do not play a role in explaining coverage. In addition, it seems that parliamentary plenaries as public fora of political contestation make EU politics as such visible which could contribute to an increase of coverage of both parliamentary levels, although in some countries more than in others.

Given the high share of articles discussing financial policies, the crisis is found a strong moderator of national parliaments' coverage. Especially the Finnish Eduskunta does not

²² Otherwise we found the almost exact mirror of the jack-knife test results when estimating models for each country individually.

provide much public activity to report on but is still covered as much as the EP in Finnish newspapers. This may be read as an increase of public controversy in member states regarding a cure for the crisis – maybe even as an expression of the relevance of NPs as guardians of national sovereignty in times of crisis.

Turning to parliaments' perceived co-operative or competitive relationship as portrayed in newspaper coverage, we take mutual effects of activities of one parliamentary level on coverage of the other as an expression of journalists' underlying perceptions. While such effects occur, we argue that their nature is more indirect than it might seem at first sight. Still, the literature shows that EP plenary sessions, albeit weakly, are likely to increase EU coverage (Boomgaarden et al. 2010); also NP sitting periods and elections can increase EP coverage (Gattermann, 2013). Mutual effects, thus, do not seem to be simply happenstance, but we cannot make a final judgment on H_6 or H_7 .

Concluding, parliaments are made visible as independent, complementary branches of parliamentary EU affairs. They seem able to increase their own visibility by being publicly active, which shows that they are perceived as relevant players in EU affairs by journalists. Robustness tests suggest that more active parliaments get more coverage, too. They also suggest that country-specific patterns exist. Overall, effect sizes and the proportionately smaller amount of activities of NPs show that the EP is less successful than its national counterparts in receiving media attention. Thus, broadly speaking, the news value of national parliaments must be regarded as higher than for the EP, and apparently due to the crisis in particular.

Against this background, we now turn to a more explicit assessment of the legitimising potential of the EP as conveyed by the media looking at the effects of newspaper contents on public opinion.

Table 15: Jack-knife Test: Effects of Debates and Questions on EP and NP Coverage

Country excluded:	No. Articles EP			No. Articles NP		
	<i>UK</i>	<i>DE</i>	<i>FI</i>	<i>UK</i>	<i>DE</i>	<i>FI</i>
EP Debates	0.0978*** (0.0228)	0.114** (0.0419)	0.0817* (0.0332)	0.118*** (0.0322)	0.110*** (0.0334)	0.0476 (0.0308)
EP Questions	0.00269 (0.00232)	-0.00349 (0.00430)	0.00411 (0.00323)	0.000563 (0.00334)	0.0000441 (0.00348)	-0.000194 (0.00302)
NP Debates	0.201* (0.0951)	0.818* (0.352)	0.281# (0.144)	0.403** (0.128)	0.489 (0.301)	0.426*** (0.119)
NP Questions	0.0408 (0.0321)	-14.21 (492.9)	-0.0489 (0.0343)	0.0476 (0.0447)	-0.0189 (0.0395)	-0.00263 (0.0276)
Tabloid	-1.704*** (0.205)	-1.641*** (0.373)	-1.788*** (0.271)	-1.219*** (0.247)	-0.853*** (0.243)	-0.904*** (0.222)
Constant	-0.200 (0.131)	-1.027*** (0.210)	-0.465* (0.185)	-0.911*** (0.184)	-1.056*** (0.187)	-0.797*** (0.169)
Overdispersion Param. Constant	-0.594* (0.236)	0.223 (0.355)	0.546** (0.193)	0.131 (0.263)	0.138 (0.301)	-0.275 (0.337)
Observations	420	420	420	420	420	420
Pseudo R^2	0.099	0.138	0.074	0.068	0.043	0.046
AIC	997.1	456.8	836.0	723.1	649.6	712.6

Standard errors in parentheses; # p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table 16: Jack-knife Test: Effects of Press Releases on EP and NP Coverage

Country excluded:	No. Articles EP			No. Articles NP		
	<i>UK</i>	<i>DE</i>	<i>FI</i>	<i>UK</i>	<i>DE</i>	<i>FI</i>
EP Press Releases	0.0962*** (0.0180)	0.0349 (0.0348)	0.113*** (0.0268)	0.0949*** (0.0259)	0.0805** (0.0268)	0.0645** (0.0250)
NP Press Releases	-0.0196 (0.129)	0.440 (0.288)	0.191 (0.186)	-0.128 (0.188)	-0.252 (0.246)	-0.223 (0.184)
Tabloid	-1.693*** (0.205)	-1.580*** (0.369)	-1.787*** (0.272)	-1.211*** (0.248)	-0.858*** (0.244)	-0.910*** (0.224)
Constant	-0.214# (0.110)	-1.316*** (0.198)	-0.662*** (0.157)	-0.863*** (0.158)	-1.078*** (0.163)	-0.831*** (0.144)
Overdispersion Param. Constant	-0.591* (0.236)	0.780** (0.302)	0.578** (0.188)	0.294 (0.244)	0.238 (0.286)	-0.102 (0.305)
Observations	420	420	420	420	420	420
Pseudo R^2	0.097	0.050	0.074	0.051	0.033	0.034
AIC	994.4	498.3	831.8	732.1	652.1	717.6

Standard errors in parentheses; # $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Figure 22: Marginal Effects Plots after Negative Binomial Regression: Marginal Effects of Debates on EP Coverage and NP Coverage

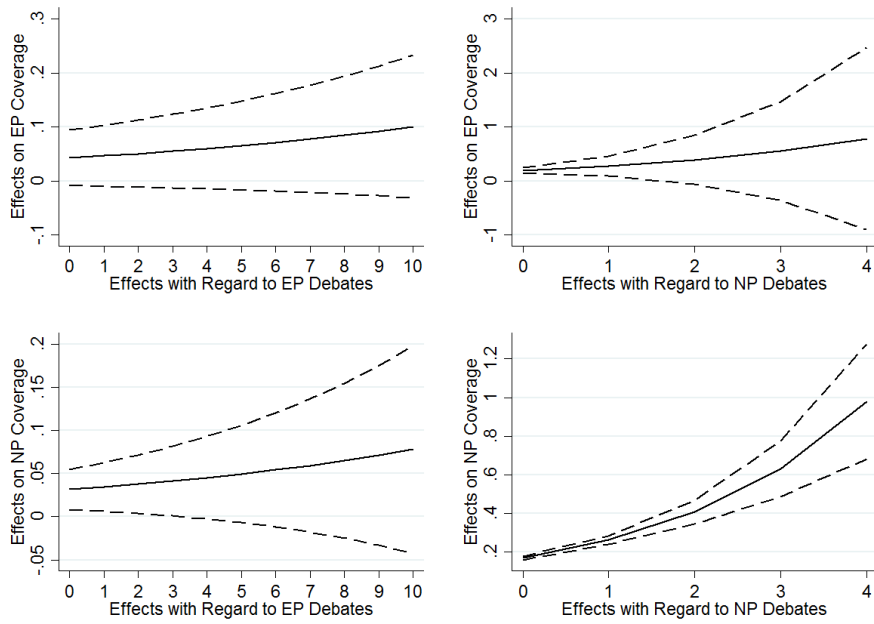
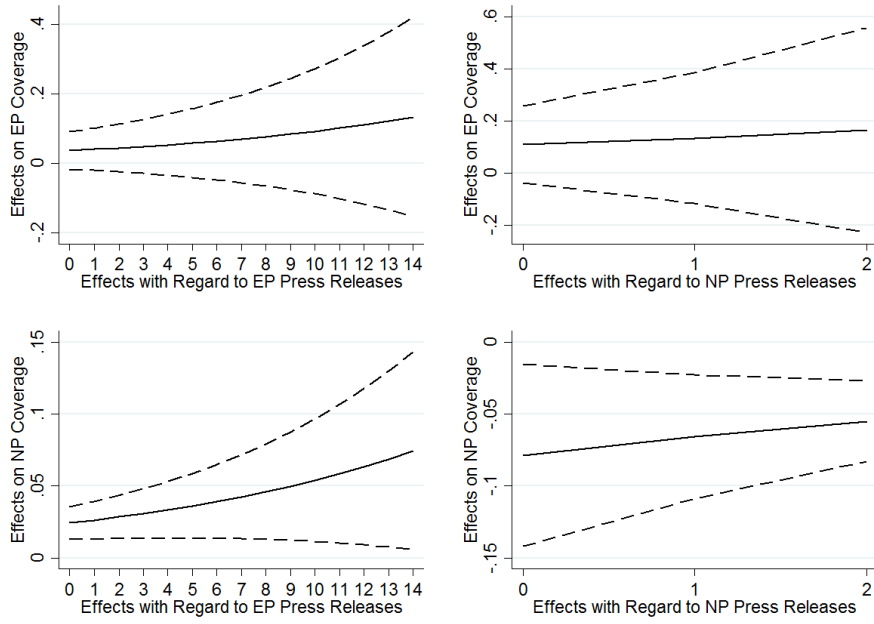


Figure 23: Marginal Effects Plots after Negative Binomial Regression: Marginal Effects of Press Releases on EP Coverage and NP Coverage



7 How Do the Visibility and Tone of EP Newspaper Coverage Influence Public Support of the European Parliament?

This chapter explicitly investigates *how the visibility and tone of EP newspaper coverage influence public support of the EP*. In doing this, it assesses if the potential of the EP to legitimise EU politics can actually be tapped or not. Other studies analysing media effects in EU affairs overall have found rather moderate effects (Hobolt and De Vries, 2016). Still, ‘European citizens are responsive to the ways in which the mass media cover EU politics and policies, and their responsiveness translates into changes in attitudes’ (De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2016: 237). It is therefore essential for research concerned with the empirical investigation of legitimacy to understand how news contents actually affect the public.

7.1 Expectations

Reconnecting to our analytical framework, the motivations of citizens differ from that of journalists, for example, since citizens are not part of an organisation that pays them to fulfil certain tasks leading to a certain output. Not participating in democratic politics is usually not sanctioned. In their evaluation of the regime, citizens are not defined as motivated by ambition but by political interest or dissatisfaction with the status quo. Moreover, in the following analysis, we look at attitudes towards the EP and how newspaper contents influence them. Expressing an attitude in an anonymous and voluntary survey such as the EES is costly in the sense that it takes time to answer questions. But there are no personal consequences regarding the actual answer given: A citizen cannot fail when expressing an attitude or appear illegitimate. In contrast, she can express the failure or withdraw legitimacy of the evaluated policy, for example. A calculation of costs and benefits (second stage of decision-making), therefore, does not play an immediate role for this analysis.

Empirical research analysing the effects of media coverage very often focusses on the media’s influence on vote decisions (e.g., Elmelund-Præstekær and Hopmann, 2012; Hopmann et al., 2010; Van Spanje and De Vreese, 2014), trust in institutions (e.g., Norris, 2000) or both (e.g., Nardis, 2015; Kleinnijenhuis et al., 2006). In the majority of these

studies, the visibility of actors and the tone of evaluation by the media are found to be crucial (also Druckman and Parkin, 2005). This empirical finding is underscored by theoretical considerations dealing with the influence of media contents as external stimulus on citizens' cognitive predispositions and the opinionation process preceding the formation of attitudes (first stage of decision-making). They are therefore seen as key aspects of media contents explaining its effects on attitudes (e.g., Chong and Druckman, 2007; Luskin, 1990; Zaller, 1992, 1996).

Regarding the EP in particular, the remoteness of the EU is a factor making it difficult for citizens to identify with it or to attribute political responsibility. For this reason, the national context is an important benchmark and a possibility to bridge a lack of knowledge (Anderson, 1998; Desmet et al., 2012; Kritzinger, 2003). Furthermore, the crisis has led to a greater importance of utilitarian considerations when evaluating EU politics. Other established explanations comprise identity-related factors and education, for example (e.g., Hobolt and De Vries, 2016). Any study concerned with the effects of newspaper contents as external stimuli, therefore, has to control for a range of possible additional influences to disentangle how citizens process the information received via the media (e.g., De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2016).

7.1.1 Visibility

The media visibility of a political actor or an institution in the news is a crucial precondition for citizens' awareness and knowledge (Hopmann et al., 2010: 390): For example, '[p]rominent and visible coverage of EU issues increases citizens' knowledge about the EU and consequentially contributes to their likelihood to participate in European referenda or elections' (Boomgaarden et al., 2010: 518). Political actors will remain unknown to the majority of citizens if they are not visible on the media stage, which in turn may seriously hamper their political success (e.g., Vos, 2014). Studies of media effects on electoral decisions and participation show that voters tend to judge the salience of candidates or parties based on their visibility in the news (Miller and Krosnik, 2000; Vliegenthart et al., 2012; also Banducci and Karp, 2003). The more visible a party leader is in the news, the more

likely citizens vote for the respective party since, judged by his or her prominence in the news, the party is deemed a viable option to support (Oegema and Kleinnijenhuis, 2000; also Semetko and Schoenbach, 1994). Studies concentrating on the visibility of extreme parties show that media indeed function as gatekeepers: They determine which party becomes visible in the news and which does not and in doing this, have a crucial say over their electoral success (Koopmans and Muis, 2009; Rydgren, 2005).

With regard to trust, visibility is found to foster the awareness for EU issues which in consequence has a positive effect on trust in EU institutions (Norris, 2000; Holtz-Bacha, 1990; also Inglehart, 1991; Strömbäck et al., 2015). Nardis (2015) assesses the impact of EP elections news contents on trust in the EP and how trust mediates the decision to vote. In considering first the impact on cognitive predispositions and afterwards the resulting behaviour, he seems to implicitly follow the PH approach finding that higher visibility of EP elections in the news lead to higher trust in the EU's parliament. More information about the EU is found to lead to an empowerment of citizens (Norris, 2010, 2012; see also Banducci and Semetko, 2003) who then also consider EU issues to a greater extent in voting (Hobolt and Wittrock, 2011). Inferring from these considerations, we may expect that

H_{8-A}: the higher the visibility of the EP in newspapers, the more likely a positive effect on citizens' attitude towards the EP.

7.1.2 Tone

Furthermore, the tonality of reporting is deemed an important aspect: Media, here, suggest an evaluation of political actors or issues which is found to be positively correlated with people's political attitudes (Druckman and Parkin, 2005; Hurrelmann et al., 2009; De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2003, 2006a; also Lecheler and De Vreese, 2012; Schuck and De Vreese, 2006). A lot of this research is prompted by the discussion about the media's role in society and its negativity which is believed to lead to an erosion of trust in public institutions (e.g. Moy et al., 1999; Strömbäck et al., 2015; also Lenaguer et al., 2011). Many studies indeed confirm such effects (De Vreese, 2004; Schuck et al., 2013; Shehata, 2014), but some studies

also suggest a more positive, or at least a not as negative role for the media (Bennett et al., 1999; De Vreese, 2005; Norris, 2000; Jackson, 2011).

Regarding the tone of evaluations, studies concerned with the legitimacy of the EU in particular define negative tonality to have a delegitimising effect while positive tonality is supposed to have a legitimising effect (Hurrelmann et al., 2009, 2012; see also Liebert and Trenz, 2008; Quiring and Weber, 2012). Especially with regard to the rise of Euroscepticism, negative tonality of media contents is identified as one explanation to account for citizens' attitudes (De Vreese, 2007). In addition, De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2006a) show that the strength of these effects depends on the information's visibility and consistency in tone meaning that the more the audience is exposed to one certain interpretation, the more likely it will stick to it (De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006a: 419; also De Vreese et al., 2006; Azrout et al., 2012). Accordingly, it is expected that not only the amount of articles, but their tonality plays a role when assessing effects on citizens' attitudes. Thus, we assume that

H_{9-A}: the more visible and the more positive reporting about the EP, the more likely a positive effect on citizens' attitude toward the EP.

7.1.3 Moderator and Control Variables

The awareness to the discourse is crucial when gauging the effects of news contents (Zaller, 1992; Delli Carpini, 2004). Political sophistication is seen as the key indicator of political awareness since 'more sophisticated and knowledgeable respondents ... may be more likely to both *receive* and *comprehend* the message in the first place' (Nelson et al., 1997: 227; emphasis in original). Moreover, they can resist the evaluations of the media if they run counter to their own predispositions since they possess enough contextual information to form an independent evaluation. Less sophisticated individuals, in contrast, are more susceptible to media contents: They are less alert to the topic and the source of information; they possess less prior knowledge that would help them to classify the received information as valid or not; they are in consequence also less motivated to organise information and form an independent opinion (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1995; Eberl et al., 2015; Jackson,

2011; Luskin, 1990; Nelson et al., 1997; Valentino et al., 2001; Zaller, 1992; also Brants et al., 2010).

To illustrate the argument with an example, Knodt and Stoiber (2015) look at citizens' motivations to vote in EP elections in Germany and state that '[i]f citizens are politically interested, they vote, be it at the national or supranational level' (Knodt and Stoiber, 2015: 112). General political interest, thus, is not dampened by second order considerations when it comes to the motivation to cast a vote in EP elections. Drawing all considerations together, we expect that the awareness of the discourse will function as a moderator of media effects.

H_{8-B}: The more aware citizens are of the EP and the more visibly newspapers report on the EP, the more likely a positive effect on citizens' attitude towards the EP.

H_{9-B}: The more aware citizens are of the EP and the more visibly and positively newspapers report on the EP, the more likely a positive effect on citizens' attitude towards the EP.

Control Variables

Studies investigating media effects demonstrate the impact of exposure to the mass media on public attitudes (Maier and Rittberger, 2008: 243; Zaller, 1996; see also Eveland et al., 2005, De Vreese and Semetko, 2004, De Vreese, 2007). However, as De Vreese and Boomgaarden argue '[i]t is by now common knowledge to political communication effects researchers that media influences are conditional' (De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2016: 239; also De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006b). Therefore, in addition to the expectations formulated above, there are several control variables that can potentially influence the attitude towards the EP and have to be controlled for when estimating the effects of media contents on public support.

The individual political position is suggested to usually be more EU critical at the extreme ends of the spectrum (Hooghe and Marks, 2009). Individuals with moderate ideological stances situated in the middle, in contrast, are found to be more supportive of EU

integration (Gabel, 1998). While political values are classified as a more fundamental, underlying basis of attitudes, e.g. being leftist or rightist (Zaller, 1992: 23), attention to the discourse may be defined by more general factors such as interest in politics, but also more specifically by attitudes towards related topics.

With regard to the EP, the most important issue-related aspects to be included in the analysis concern it being a European institution on the one hand and a parliament on the other. It is argued that EU variables need to be included also to disentangle attitudes towards the EU as a regime and the EP as a single institution (Gabel, 2003). In this respect, opinions towards EU membership and citizens' concerns about the scope of EU authority are found influential. Such studies (Ares et al., 2016; Armingeon and Ceka, 2014; Anderson, 1998; Desmet et al., 2012; Hobolt, 2012; Maier and Rittberger, 2008; Serricchio et al., 2013) also suggest that support for the EU depends on peoples' evaluations of the national counterpart – e.g. the domestic parliament (Gabel, 2003; also Boomgaarden, 2016). We discussed the importance of the national context also in earlier chapters. Even journalists themselves follow a routine of explaining the EP in the terminology of the national parliamentary culture because the EP is too difficult to explain in its own terms (Gattermann, 2011, 2013). Media effects of contents implicitly referencing the NP could even be expected to motivate citizens to resort to their predispositions concerning their national representation when asked about their attitude towards the EP (Anderson 1998).

Concerning the salience of specific issues during the period of analysis, the financial crisis is found to fuel anti-European attitudes since it made the (bad) influence of European politics 'painfully felt' (Baglioni and Hurrelmann, 2016) by European citizens. While some studies suggest a more ambivalent influence of the crisis on Euroscepticism (e.g., Serricchio et al., 2013), others find it to be a crucial reason for the politicisation of EU politics and rising anti-EU sentiments expressed in large gains for Eurosceptic parties (Usherwood and Startin, 2013; Conti, 2014; Hutter and Kerscher, 2014). To control for this effect, the evaluation of the economy is included into their analyses (Serricchio et al., 2013; Okolikj and Quinlan, 2016; Boomgaarden et al., 2011). But also independently from the crisis context, a positive

evaluation of the economic situation is found to lead to higher support of EU integration (Anderson, 1998; Gabel and Palmer, 1995; Anderson and Reichert, 1996).

Moreover, studies focusing on media effects list the level of education (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996, De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006a and 2006b, David, 2009, Norris, 2012; Strömbäck and Shehata, 2010) as an established intervening variable: Citizens with a greater level of education are ascribed a higher awareness and higher interest in politics (Norris, 2012; Gabel, 1998; also Miller and Krosnik, 2000; Schuck and De Vreese, 2006). Other control variables concern demographic information such as age or gender of the respondent; in this respect, elder citizens and men are usually found more supportive (De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2016: 244; also De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006b).

7.2 Linking Media Exposure with Attitudes

To assess the effects of media contents on the support of the EP, our linkage analysis matches media content data with survey data (e.g., De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2016; Giebler et al., 2016; Jebril et al., 2013; Hopmann et al., 2010; Van Spanje and De Vreese, 2014). The survey data used for the analysis are taken from the EES Voter Study of 2009 and 2014. Generally, the number of observations is larger in 2014 (N=4165) than in 2009 (N=3004).²³ Interviews for the surveys are conducted in the three weeks following Election Day. Due to the lack of data on media exposure at routine times, only elections periods are considered and accordingly, the analysis only includes newspaper contents of 2009 and 2014.

The media data on EP contents used for the construction of the exposure variable are aggregate values of the weeks preceding elections; when connecting media content data with the individual observation in the survey, however, the date of the survey interview is taken into consideration: If an interview is conducted in the week after Election Day, the three preceding weeks are used for the variable; if an interview is conducted two weeks

²³ This was mainly due to financial constraints of the project as such (see European Election Survey, 2009, 2014).

after Election Day, the four preceding weeks are used to compute an aggregate value with regard to the visibility (amount) and tone (average value) of the articles. In doing this, we control for the greater exposure to election news of citizens who were interviewed later. In addition, the necessary condition of temporal antecedence for establishing causality is fulfilled (e.g., Tacq, 2011).

For the visibility of the EP in the media, the additive number of articles for a certain period is used. Tonality, as discussed earlier, is coded according to terms manifest in the text that convey a positive, negative or neutral/ambivalent picture of the EP as an institution. Note that this excludes 'election actors' such as national candidates or parties in campaigning for EP elections.

Questionnaires of the two waves of 2009 and 2014 do not correspond entirely. For maintaining comparability of the data of the two elections in 2009 and 2014, we only use variables that are included in both surveys (overview in Table 17). However, the wording of items is still different; therefore, regression models are calculated separately for the two years.

All variables are rescaled if necessary to express a more favourable view towards the item in question with ascending values, i.e. 1-strongly disagree and 5-strongly agree. In descriptive results, therefore, a higher mean expresses a more favourable attitude towards the item or higher frequency of, e.g., reading a newspaper. In addition, don't know answers, system missing and refusals are recoded to missing values and, accordingly, not considered in the analysis. In addition, all variables are standardised to make coefficients comparable. The models are estimated using an OLS regression model with country clustered standard errors to account for a possible distortion of the analysis by an intra-group correlation of error terms.

Dependent Variable

To consider the multidimensionality of EP support, as discussed earlier, the dependent variable is constructed as a two item measure including the agreement to the statement 'the

EP takes the concerns of citizens into consideration' (specific support) and 'I trust the institutions of the European Union' (diffuse support). Unfortunately, a more fine-grained item for trust in the EP is not available in the EES survey. To validate the use of this trust variable, the correlations of all trust variables pertaining to single EU institutions available in the EB Surveys (2009-2014) were checked. Correlations were found to never drop below 85% for trust in the Commission, the EP, the Council of the EU and the European Central Bank (ECB). It is therefore argued that using this less fine-grained variable does not distort our results considerably.

Furthermore, the selection of items for our dependent variable is based on an exploratory factor analysis analysing factor loadings of all questions tackling the trust in institutions at EU level and concerning EP issues. In addition, previous studies on public support for the EU (e.g., Boomgaarden et al., 2011; De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2016) were consulted. It is argued that using an index does not only widen the spectrum of dimensions of an attitude but also helps to reduce measurement error in survey questions (e.g., Gabel, 2003). In sum, the available measures of more diffuse and more specific support are combined. Both above mentioned variables are added to form an index of EP Attitude ($r=.52$ for 2009; $r=.62$ for 2014). Reliability of the index was also tested in a factor analysis; results show that both variables load on one factor with an explained variance of .79 for 2009 and 1.01 for 2014.

Independent Variable

Our main independent variable is the individual exposure to media contents. Based on theoretical considerations, we start the analysis with raw measures of media exposure which do not include the actual contents of news yet. We then proceed to weighted exposure since contents do matter (see Schuck et al., 2016 and Fazekas and Larsen, 2015 for an elaborate discussion): For example, a raw exposure measure would suggest that an individual read the paper around 5 times per week. If looking into the actual contents about the item we are interested in, however, would reveal that it was hardly covered at all, including a raw exposure measure could tell us that media consumption potentially influences support of the EP, but it would not tell us much about the media's actual

portrayals of the EP and their particular influence. Weighting the exposure by the actual contents in the papers, thus, ‘forms a necessary *correction* for an otherwise potentially inflated or deflated “raw exposure” effect’ (Schuck et al., 2016: 209; emphasis in original).

Consequently, different measures are compared: To begin with, (1) the raw exposure which connects to citizens’ self-reporting of how many days per week (2009) or times per week/month (2014) they watch TV or read newspapers in general, is used to control for the actual impact of contents added in later models.

(2) The visibility of the EP in newspapers is used and related to citizens’ self-reported frequency of following certain newspapers²⁴. To illustrate the computation of this weighted newspaper exposure variable: Person X reports to read The Times 5 days per week, The Guardian 2 days per week and The Sun 0 days per week. Connecting to the data yielded in the media content analysis, the exposure of person X is weighted by multiplying the amount of articles with the number of days for each newspaper. The three values for each newspaper are then added up to amount to one total value of individual, weighted media exposure (see Van Spanje and De Vreese, 2014; also De Vreese and Semetko, 2004; De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2016).²⁵ It is argued that linking different outlets to their specific audience makes the effects of specific contents more tangible (De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006c: 318).

(3) Considering the tone of reporting, a third media exposure variable includes the amount of articles multiplied with the average tonality of articles in each newspaper. The same procedure of weighting contents according to citizens’ self-reported reading frequency is

²⁴ It should be mentioned that exposure variables were scaled differently in the two surveys. The question in both surveys was ‘How many days per week do you follow X?’ with a scaling from 0 to 7 days per week For 2009. For 2014, the scaling ranged from never-less often-once a month-once a week-several times a week-every day/almost every day.

In addition, the variable for raw exposure was created as an addition from specific newspaper measures if not available (i.e., How often do you follow The Times + How often do you follow The Sun + How often do you follow The Guardian). See appendix Table A14 for details on wording and scaling of survey items.

²⁵ Since the newspaper sample in EES 2014 does not include The Times, the exposure variable could not be weighted according to specific newspaper reading frequencies; we therefore had to aggregate the weighted exposure measure at country level for 2014 for the UK.

employed resulting in one value accounting for the exposure of EP contents in terms of visibility and tone.

In addition, the analysis gives credit to the insight that the EP is repeatedly found to be a low salience institution which is expected to be of greater interest only for citizens that are generally aware of political issues (Gabel, 2003; Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Schmitt, 2005; Viola, 2016; Schmitt and Toygür, 2016; Hobolt and Wittrock, 2011). We include (a) one interaction term of media exposure and political interest as a proxy for the general awareness of politics and (b) one interaction term of media exposure and awareness of the EP in particular.

We do not use sophistication or factual knowledge about the EP as a moderator (e.g., Zaller, 1996). This is in accordance with similar media effects studies (De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2003; Kritzinger and Johann, 2016; Jebril et al., 2013; Maier and Rittberger, 2008). Furthermore, knowledge questions in the EES relate to EU rather than EP issues. We therefore resort to the following two items: (a) 'To what extent are you interested in politics?' for controlling for general political interest, and, to make a more issue-specific assessment, (b) 'Have you read/watched something about EP elections in newspapers/TV?'

Control Variables

As discussed above, there are some crucial control variables that have to be included when assessing public evaluations of the EP. One is the attitude towards EU membership to disentangle support for the regime from the single institution. In addition, concerns about the scope of EU authority are found to affect citizens in their evaluations of the parliament (Gabel, 2003). Accordingly, the two factors are included using the (dis)agreement to the statements 'EU membership generally is a good thing' and 'EU unification should be pushed further'. In addition, studies repeatedly suggest the national political context to serve as a proxy in the evaluation of European politics. Therefore, the analysis includes the (dis)agreement to the statement 'The national parliament takes the concerns of citizens into consideration' which is the only question on NP issues available for both surveys (Anderson, 1998; Desmet et al., 2012; Boomgaarden, 2016; Armingeon and Ceka, 2015).

In an attempt to design a conservative model comparable to other studies, a range of control variables is included that was established in relevant studies. These include political ideology which is inserted in the form of two dummy variables accounting for left position and right position. Following similar studies, dummies are computed on the basis of the self-reported positioning in the political spectrum (11-point scale) with the four extreme points on the left (0-3) or right side (8-11) of the spectrum coded as 1 (Boomgaarden et al., 2011: 253; also De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2005). This adequately captures the main argument that individuals with extreme positions usually have a more EU critical influence while still distinguishing left and right positions (De Vries and Edwards, 2009; Hooghe et al., 2002; Spoon, 2012); it also helps to reduce the number of missing values since the question of self-positioning on the left-right-scale contains a comparatively large number of refusals and don't know answers. Furthermore, demographic characteristics such as gender (1=female) and education (in which year did you stop full-time education?) and age are included.

Last but not least, the analysis includes citizens' economic evaluation. The variable is constructed to display the trend of how well citizens evaluate the state of the economy in the past and what they expect for the future. This is done to understand how optimistically citizens look into the future based on their experiences in the past. Based on considerations discussed in the literature (Hurrelmann, 2014; Okolikj and Quinlan, 2016), citizens are expected to have become more aware of the (bad) implications of the crisis. This is expected to lead to more pessimistic assessments of what the future will bring and to less support for EU integration and the EP respectively. Table 17 provides an overview of all survey items used, including questions, numbers of observations and means with standard deviations.

Table 17: Overview of Survey Items and Descriptive Statistics Included in Models

Variable	Survey Items for 2009 & 2014	2009			2014		
		Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.
EP Attitude	<i>Additive index variable:</i> - EP takes citizens' concerns into consideration - You trust the EU institutions	2881	2.958348	1.022745	3744	2.45633	.7623084
Support Membership	EU Membership is a good/bad thing	2968	2.350067	.8363337	4053	2.402418	.7459427
Support Unification	Unification should be pushed further/has already gone too far	2957	4.452486	2.859508	3813	4.919486	2.859617
NP Responsiveness	The [national] parliament takes citizens' concerns into consideration	2970	3.417845	1.21964	4027	2.592252	.7776176
Economic Evaluation Trend	Evaluation of economy of past 12 months subtracted from evaluation of the coming 12 months	2966	1.308159	1.307952	3933	.1052632	.8469353
Political Interest	To what extent are you interested in politics?	3002	2.682545	.8378073	4151	2.644182	.9829213
EP Awareness (newspapers)	Have you read about the European elections in the newspapers?	3000	2.035667	.7487199	4140	1.924396	.7562793
EP Awareness (TV)	Have you watched a programme about EP elections on TV?	3001	1.953349	.7149519	4124	1.835112	.7177247
Position Left	Dummies for left and right position (4 left/right extreme points of self-assessment = 1)	3004	.1501332	.3572614	4165	.1867947	.3897934
Position Right		3004	.3142477	.4642928	4165	.2012005	.4009457
Age	How old are you?	2968	57.10883	16.59989	4165	53.23553	18.71404
Gender	Male (0)/female (1)	3003	.5141525	.4998829	4165	.5246098	.499454
Education	How old were you when you stopped full time education?	3004	2.38482	.7985893	4100	2.267561	.8579928
Raw Exposure Print News	How often do you follow newspapers?	2903	2.145711	3.183746	4160	3.421154	1.905191
Raw Exposure TV	How often do you follow TV news?	2897	1.547549	1.15624	4159	4.289733	1.353906
Weighted Exposure: Visibility	No. of articles * Frequency of Reading Newspapers	2903	129.5002	235.4117	3980	389.1982	345.7417
Tone	Average of tone of articles	2903	-.22642	.6653102	3980	-.52848	.6302344

The correlations of all variables included in the models were calculated but never rose above .45 (see appendix Tables A12 and A13 for results and Table A14 for scaling of individual variables). Also tests to detect multicollinearity problems did not reveal difficulties; variance inflation factors calculated for independent variables never rose above 2.17 for any of the models calculated in this chapter.²⁶

Including the information environment as a contextual influence is a key interest of many, more recent studies that advocated including macro level variables as controls, like for example the mean visibility of an issue during a defined period in the national media (e.g., De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2016). Due to the low number of cases in this sample, however, it is deemed more adequate to incorporate the context as background information into the discussion of results rather than including it in the regression. Having clarified the methodological underpinnings of the analysis, we shall now discuss our results.

7.3 Results and Conclusions

Before turning to the results of the regression analysis, we take a short look at descriptive results. We should however, interpret them carefully since the survey samples do not consist of the same respondents. A closer look is nonetheless important to understand the differences in citizens' attitudes between elections, especially since models are calculated separately.

For most variables, the means for both years in the sample remain roughly stable, e.g., the support of EU membership and the support of further unification. However, we can observe a slight drop in support for the EP and also the national parliament which is in line with research focusing on broader trends over the course of EU integration (European Parliament, 2015). Another interesting change is observed in citizens' economic evaluations: The variable is calculated to indicate the trend (evaluation of the last 12 months subtracted from the evaluation of the next 12 months); meaning that a positive value stands for the

²⁶ A common agreement in the literature is that a statistical model suffers from multicollinearity problems when reaching a variance inflation factor of 10 or above (e.g., O'Brien, 2007).

opinion that the future economic situation will be better than the past. The descriptive results show that citizens became much more pessimistic about the economy in 2014 compared to their experiences in the past. Interestingly, we also observe a drop in the mean of the variable accounting for rightist self-placement. Thus, less people in the sample positioned themselves at the extreme right end of the political spectrum in 2014 than in 2009. This seems surprising given that Eurosceptic parties had a rather overwhelming success in both elections – even more so in 2014 (De Wilde et al., 2014; Hobolt, 2014; Treib, 2014).

Turning to the regression analysis, results show rather weak effects for raw media exposure models. TV exposure is not found to matter at all while the exposure to print news has a weakly significant effect ($p < 0.1$), but for the elections in 2014 only (see Tables 18 and 19). This is in accordance with what we have discussed earlier (chapter 4.2), namely that consumers of print news pay more attention than consumers of TV news. It may, of course, also indicate a lower visibility of the EP in TV news generally.

Our findings highlight the importance of weighting news exposure by the actual contents reported, even if the weighted measure returns mixed results: Regarding the sheer visibility of the EP in print news, we find a weakly significant, positive effect only for the interaction term of weighted exposure and EP awareness in 2009 (see Table 20; see appendix Figure A9 for marginal effects plot) but no effects in 2014. The picture changes by adding the tone of reporting: Effects of weighted newspaper exposure disappear for 2009. For 2014, however, direct effects of the tonality of reported news are significant at the 95% level in our EP awareness model and at the 99% level for the political interest model. Interaction terms are no longer significant.

To check the robustness of these results, we use a jack-knife test for all models leaving out one country in turn (see appendix table A15 for results). The test confirms the robustness of significant effects in the pooled model; however, it also reveals some country-specific differences. In 2009, for example, our raw measure for newspapers ('How often do you follow newspapers?') and also the visibility measure (i.e., the sheer amount of newspaper

articles weighted by self-reported frequency) yield negatively significant effects mainly driven by the inclusion of the German sample which also shows the lowest means for both variables (see appendix Table A16 for an overview of population parameters regarding exposure variables). In 2014, then, a greater visibility in newspapers leads to significantly lower support if the UK sample is included; in accordance with this, also descriptive values show the greatest negativity of reporting in UK papers. Also watching TV shows significant positive effects in some models which, however, do not appear in the pooled model. Other effects found significant in the pooled models are consistent in the test. Thus, while some country-specific differences occur, we can conclude that the influence of media effects found in our pooled models is robust across the three countries in our sample.

The significance of media effects in 2014 is dampened to some extent in the EP awareness model which seems to indicate that citizens already aware of the EP are not as significantly influenced by what the media convey in 2014 as citizens with general political interest. However, this must be assumed to also be due to the fact that our EP awareness measure in itself refers to the consumption of news contents already and, thus, can be assumed to eat up some of the effects of our weighted exposure variable. In this respect, correlation for the variables is found higher than for other variables, but still low enough to justify their inclusion into one model (see appendix Tables A12 and A13 for correlation matrix). Moreover, in line with what other studies find regarding the substantive size of effects of EU media contents, coefficients are rather small indicating a moderate impact of newspaper contents on public support (e.g., Blumler, 2015; De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2016; Hobolt and De Vries, 2016).

Regarding control variables, all models calculated show, compared with other variables, the largest and most significant effects for issue-related variables: support of EU membership, the support of further European Integration, and the perceived responsiveness of the national legislature. The significance of the influence of the attitude towards the national parliament seems to be dampened in 2014 in all models calculated. Another noteworthy influence ($p < 0.1$) in 2014 is the trend of the economic evaluation; other control variables are

found to play no significant role for the attitude towards the EP. One exception is gender indicating that women tend to be more supportive of the EP in 2014. Given the very low substantive size of the effect, however, we will focus on our main explanatory variables only for the analysis at hand.

Hypotheses hold to very mixed degrees. Results seem to indicate that in 2014, susceptibility for media contents has increased considerably: In 2009, the audience need to be aware of EP elections in the first place for being susceptible to newspaper contents about the EP. They are so, however, only in terms of visibility. This confirms hypothesis H_{8-B}: Citizens that are aware of the political discourse are affected by the visibility, but not the evaluations that newspapers provide. Those affected, thus, are assumed to be knowledgeable and motivated enough to categorise and evaluate information without relying on mediated opinions of journalists (Luskin, 1990; Norris, 2000; Zaller, 1992; also Nardis, 2015). In 2014, effects of news contents become direct and also affect citizens in terms of tone. It seems that the EP as a topic in itself grew more salient. This result lends support to hypothesis H_{9-A} assuming a positive effect of evaluative news on public support for the EP.

Against this background, it is essential to reflect on what made EP elections in 2014 different from those 5 years earlier to understand our results. In general, research has found that European elections became more visible and more salient over time (Banducci and Semetko, 2003; Boomgaarden and De Vreese 2016; Hobolt et al., 2009; Van der Brug and De Vreese, 2016a). ‘This time it’s different’ was the 2014 slogan of the EP highlighting the fact that, for the first time, Europe-wide top candidates, so called ‘Spitzenkandidaten’, were nominated by party families. The 2014 elections were also the first ones after the Lisbon treaty had come into force which included the further extension of the EP powers in EU decision making (Hobolt, 2014; Schulze, 2016; for a general overview of EP elections over time see also Viola, 2016). This increased strength may have corroborated the EP’s relevance in the public eye. However, recalling our results from the descriptive analysis in chapter 5, variables indicating that an article identified the EP as a strong parliament (chapter 4.3) had to be dropped because they did not appear often enough. Also given the strong national bias

of reporting and the little amount of legitimacy statements and their rather negative nature, we may conclude that the increased strength of the EP is not mirrored in reporting. In addition, studies looking at the influence of Spitzenkandidaten do not find that their presence significantly changed EP elections in terms of turnout or coverage compared to earlier polls (Hobolt, 2014; Schulze, 2016).

Another reason for the increased saliency of elections and the EP as such is the financial crisis which provided a nourishing context for EU critical voices and a politicisation of EU politics (De Wilde and Zürn, 2012; Hutter and Grande, 2014; Rauh and Zürn, 2014; Statham and Trenz, 2013). With regard to public attitudes, literature suggests that at the time of the elections in 2014, taking place after 5 more years in a crisis-ridden EU, consequences have become more palpable for citizens than they were in the beginnings of the crisis in 2009 (e.g., Hurrelmann, 2014; also Hobolt and Tilley, 2014; Hobolt, 2014). This may explain why citizens became more pessimistic about the economy in 2014, as indicated in descriptive results on the trend in the economic evaluation.

Furthermore, in tracing the differences between the two elections regarding Euroscepticism, Sericchio et al. (2013), posit

‘that a ‘trade-off’ effect was at work during the evolution of the financial crisis over time. In the first phase of the financial crisis, the so-called ‘banking crisis’, the main response came from national institutions. ... In the second stage of the financial crisis, the sovereign debt crisis, the EU played a more important role. ... At this stage, confidence in national institutions became less important in explaining Euroscepticism. By contrast, confidence in EU institutions has greater explanatory power for Euroscepticism (Sericchio et al., 2013: 60/61).

EU institutions may have been in public focus to a greater degree in 2014 than they were in 2009. This may be an explanation for why the influence of the attitude towards the national parliament, assumed to be a proxy bridging a lack of knowledge, becomes less significant in 2014.

Table 18: Effects of Raw Newspaper Exposure on Support for the EP

	2009				2014			
	EP Awareness		Political Interest		EP Awareness		Political Interest	
Support Membership	0.148* (0.0159)	0.148* (0.0159)	0.156** (0.0143)	0.156** (0.0141)	0.332** (0.0321)	0.332** (0.0325)	0.331** (0.0316)	0.330** (0.0315)
Support for Unification	0.258* (0.0469)	0.257* (0.0469)	0.260* (0.0487)	0.260* (0.0489)	0.193* (0.0391)	0.193* (0.0389)	0.192* (0.0408)	0.191* (0.0405)
NP Responsiveness	0.372** (0.0135)	0.372** (0.0138)	0.373** (0.0147)	0.373** (0.0148)	0.301* (0.0373)	0.301* (0.0376)	0.304* (0.0392)	0.304* (0.0392)
Evaluation of Economy	0.00601 (0.0287)	0.00628 (0.0294)	0.00575 (0.0288)	0.00583 (0.0292)	0.0468 (0.0196)	0.0468 (0.0201)	0.0496 (0.0174)	0.0500# (0.0171)
Left Position	0.0420 (0.0430)	0.0415 (0.0433)	0.0492 (0.0476)	0.0491 (0.0476)	-0.00348 (0.0128)	-0.00352 (0.0125)	-0.00584 (0.0149)	-0.00531 (0.0152)
Right Position	-0.00195 (0.0123)	-0.00183 (0.0123)	0.00225 (0.0116)	0.00235 (0.0118)	-0.0121 (0.0209)	-0.0120 (0.0206)	-0.0134 (0.0218)	-0.0131 (0.0218)
Age	-0.0532 (0.0431)	-0.0532 (0.0435)	-0.0435 (0.0351)	-0.0434 (0.0354)	-0.0430 (0.0448)	-0.0425 (0.0417)	-0.0448 (0.0434)	-0.0450 (0.0430)
Gender	0.0208 (0.0127)	0.0210 (0.0124)	0.0148 (0.00540)	0.0149 (0.00510)	0.0475* (0.00645)	0.0475* (0.00623)	0.0497** (0.00367)	0.0500** (0.00335)
Education	0.0168 (0.0284)	0.0171 (0.0284)	0.0204 (0.0297)	0.0204 (0.0297)	0.0211 (0.0151)	0.0211 (0.0151)	0.0215 (0.0166)	0.0215 (0.0168)
Awareness EP	0.0351 (0.0236)	0.0370 (0.0199)			0.0389 (0.0267)	0.0407 (0.0155)	--	--
Interest in Politics			-0.0324 (0.0411)	-0.0323 (0.0414)	--	--	0.0329 (0.0306)	0.0325 (0.0308)
Raw Exposure Print News	-0.0441 (0.0194)	-0.0497 (0.0222)	-0.0386 (0.0229)	-0.0389 (0.0233)	0.0335 (0.0232)	0.0302 (0.0220)	0.0503# (0.0158)	0.0504# (0.0143)
EP Awareness * Raw Exposure		0.0194 (0.0135)				-0.00575 (0.0370)		
Interest in Politics * Raw Exposure				0.00303 (0.00988)				0.0138 (0.00559)
Constant	-0.00147 (0.0351)	-0.00532 (0.0347)	- (0.0406)	- (0.0407)	-0.00694 (0.0388)	-0.00353 (0.0483)	-0.00849 (0.0423)	-0.0114 (0.0417)
Observations	2482	2482	2484	2484	3245	3245	3253	3253
R ²	0.345	0.345	0.343	0.343	0.434	0.434	0.434	0.434
AIC	6025.7	6024.5	6035.5	6035.5	7305.5	7305.4	7323.3	7322.4

Standard errors in parentheses; # p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table 19: Effects of Raw TV Exposure on Support for the EP

	2009				2014			
	EP Awareness		Political Interest		EP Awareness		Political Interest	
Support	0.146*	0.146*	0.153**	0.152**	0.332**	0.332**	0.331**	0.330**
Membership	(0.0158)	(0.0156)	(0.0142)	(0.0142)	(0.0314)	(0.0315)	(0.0321)	(0.0326)
Support for	0.259*	0.259*	0.263*	0.264*	0.192*	0.192*	0.193*	0.193*
Unification	(0.0509)	(0.0509)	(0.0502)	(0.0496)	(0.0403)	(0.0403)	(0.0412)	(0.0413)
NP Responsiveness	0.371**	0.371**	0.372**	0.370**	0.304*	0.304*	0.306*	0.306*
	(0.0154)	(0.0155)	(0.0154)	(0.0160)	(0.0400)	(0.0399)	(0.0406)	(0.0413)
Evaluation of	0.00885	0.00889	0.0106	0.00873	0.0481	0.0481	0.0512	0.0520
Economy	(0.0253)	(0.0254)	(0.0260)	(0.0256)	(0.0218)	(0.0218)	(0.0190)	(0.0187)
Left Pos.	0.0368	0.0370	0.0429	0.0461	-0.00434	-0.00432	-0.00500	-0.00370
	(0.0420)	(0.0415)	(0.0466)	(0.0463)	(0.0124)	(0.0125)	(0.0145)	(0.0169)
Right Pos.	-0.00848	-	-0.00525	-0.00186	-0.0110	-0.0108	-0.0103	-0.0106
	(0.0135)	0.00830	(0.0122)	(0.0136)	(0.0208)	(0.0206)	(0.0203)	(0.0203)
	(0.0135)	(0.0138)						
Age	-0.0604	-0.0605	-0.0531	-0.0517	-0.0437	-0.0433	-0.0419	-0.0421
	(0.0419)	(0.0416)	(0.0370)	(0.0369)	(0.0410)	(0.0410)	(0.0393)	(0.0394)
Gender	0.0202	0.0203	0.0145	0.0143	0.0483*	0.0484*	0.0493**	0.0495**
	(0.0134)	(0.0131)	(0.00827)	(0.00888)	(0.00795)	(0.00804)	(0.00454)	(0.00427)
Education	0.00713	0.00725	0.00776	0.00945	0.0263	0.0264	0.0280	0.0289
	(0.0229)	(0.0226)	(0.0273)	(0.0260)	(0.0161)	(0.0162)	(0.0157)	(0.0160)
EP Awaren.	0.0282	0.0284	--	--	0.0466#	0.0485#	--	--
	(0.0314)	(0.0314)			(0.0152)	(0.0159)		
Interest in Politics	--	--	-0.0304	-0.0311	--	--	0.0364	0.0346
			(0.0387)	(0.0290)			(0.0307)	(0.0326)
Raw Exposure TV	-	-	0.0102	0.00450	0.0276	0.0226	0.0386	0.0427*
	0.000556	0.00110	(0.00641)	(0.00319)	(0.0162)	(0.0156)	(0.0182)	(0.00784)
	(0.0136)	(0.0135)						
EP Awareness *		0.00296				-0.00770		
Raw Exp.		(0.0100)				(0.00556)		
Interest in Politics *				0.0378				0.0404
Raw Exp.				(0.0158)				(0.0249)
Constant	-0.00219	-	-0.00228	-0.00828	-0.00531	-0.00270	-0.00718	-0.0131
	(0.0363)	0.00323	(0.0446)	(0.0450)	(0.0397)	(0.0379)	(0.0439)	(0.0426)
	(0.0363)	(0.0348)						
Observations	2488	2488	2488	2488	3232	3232	3253	3253
R ²	0.341	0.341	0.341	0.342	0.432	0.432	0.433	0.435
AIC	6047.1	6047.1	6044.7	6039.1	7279.0	7278.8	7328.3	7320.3

Standard errors in parentheses; # p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table 20: Effects of EP Articles on Public Support Weighted by Visibility

	2009				2014			
	EP Awareness		Political Interest		EP Awareness		Political Interest	
Support Membership	0.148* (0.0175)	0.149* (0.0176)	0.156** (0.0154)	0.156** (0.0155)	0.336** (0.0337)	0.336* (0.0342)	0.336* (0.0339)	0.336** (0.0336)
Support for Unification	0.258* (0.0469)	0.258* (0.0465)	0.261* (0.0487)	0.260* (0.0484)	0.191* (0.0398)	0.191* (0.0394)	0.190* (0.0411)	0.191* (0.0412)
NP Responsiveness	0.373** (0.0135)	0.373** (0.0140)	0.374** (0.0145)	0.374** (0.0147)	0.297* (0.0432)	0.296* (0.0431)	0.301* (0.0461)	0.301* (0.0463)
Evaluation of Economy	0.00614 (0.0285)	0.00703 (0.0290)	0.00589 (0.0286)	0.00630 (0.0288)	0.0520 (0.0188)	0.0507 (0.0179)	0.0567# (0.0168)	0.0573# (0.0175)
Left Position	0.0408 (0.0431)	0.0406 (0.0426)	0.0478 (0.0478)	0.0476 (0.0475)	-0.00459 (0.0128)	-0.00492 (0.0126)	-0.00574 (0.0156)	-0.00553 (0.0159)
Right Position	- 0.00419 (0.0126)	- 0.00379 (0.0123)	0.0000646 (0.0119)	0.000544 (0.0113)	-0.00888 (0.0202)	-0.00967 (0.0207)	-0.00719 (0.0212)	-0.00699 (0.0210)
Age	-0.0524 (0.0432)	-0.0518 (0.0433)	-0.0435 (0.0352)	-0.0431 (0.0352)	-0.0418 (0.0445)	-0.0419 (0.0444)	-0.0375 (0.0451)	-0.0374 (0.0448)
Gender	0.0223 (0.0130)	0.0226 (0.0127)	0.0163 (0.00603)	0.0169 (0.00621)	0.0474* (0.00542)	0.0474* (0.00540)	0.0486** (0.00265)	0.0487** (0.00264)
Education	0.0157 (0.0290)	0.0160 (0.0295)	0.0187 (0.0299)	0.0190 (0.0304)	0.0221 (0.0139)	0.0210 (0.0155)	0.0259 (0.0152)	0.0258 (0.0151)
Awareness EP	0.0306 (0.0252)	0.0346 (0.0135)	--	--	0.0516 (0.0282)	0.0506 (0.0306)	--	--
Interest in Politics	--	--	-0.0323 (0.0419)	-0.0311 (0.0404)	--	--	0.0362 (0.0363)	0.0361 (0.0355)
Weighted Exposure	-0.0243 (0.0135)	-0.0367 (0.0176)	-0.0202 (0.0154)	-0.0216 (0.0174)	-0.0231 (0.00892)	-0.0239# (0.00609)	-0.0307 (0.0122)	-0.0294 (0.0114)
Awareness EP * Weighted Exposure		0.0369# (0.0117)				0.0136 (0.0181)		
Interest in Politics * Weighted Exposure				0.0142 (0.00949)				-0.00745 (0.0118)
Constant	- 0.00143 (0.0379)	- 0.00796 (0.0373)	-0.000883 (0.0430)	-0.00154 (0.0428)	-0.00410 (0.0428)	- 0.000983 (0.0429)	-0.00205 (0.0471)	-0.00256 (0.0470)
Observations	2482	2482	2484	2484	3126	3126	3134	3134
R ²	0.344	0.345	0.342	0.343	0.429	0.430	0.428	0.429
A/C	6030.5	6026.3	6039.5	6038.9	7039.0	7038.0	7062.7	7062.4

Standard errors in parentheses; # p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table 21: Effects of EP Articles on Public Support Weighted by Visibility and Tone

	2009				2014			
	EP Awareness		Political Interest		EP Awareness		Political Interest	
Support Membership	0.147* (0.0179)	0.147* (0.0179)	0.155* (0.0156)	0.155** (0.0154)	0.336** (0.0335)	0.336** (0.0335)	0.336** (0.0336)	0.335** (0.0333)
Support for Unification	0.257* (0.0474)	0.257* (0.0469)	0.260* (0.0494)	0.259* (0.0496)	0.191* (0.0397)	0.191* (0.0396)	0.190* (0.0412)	0.189* (0.0407)
NP Responsiveness	0.374** (0.0134)	0.374** (0.0136)	0.375** (0.0145)	0.375** (0.0146)	0.296* (0.0431)	0.296* (0.0432)	0.300* (0.0459)	0.300* (0.0462)
Evaluation of Economy	0.00640 (0.0293)	0.00701 (0.0292)	0.00616 (0.0293)	0.00633 (0.0295)	0.0510 (0.0188)	0.0506 (0.0185)	0.0550# (0.0164)	0.0556# (0.0172)
Left Position	0.0396 (0.0439)	0.0395 (0.0431)	0.0467 (0.0486)	0.0466 (0.0486)	-0.00503 (0.0129)	-0.00515 (0.0126)	-0.00682 (0.0155)	-0.00639 (0.0163)
Right Position	-0.00637 (0.0113)	-0.00642 (0.0115)	-0.00187 (0.0113)	-0.00159 (0.0115)	-0.00986 (0.0198)	-0.0101 (0.0207)	-0.00926 (0.0207)	-0.00894 (0.0207)
Age	-0.0532 (0.0434)	-0.0529 (0.0435)	-0.0443 (0.0349)	-0.0441 (0.0350)	-0.0416 (0.0443)	-0.0414 (0.0433)	-0.0399 (0.0443)	-0.0400 (0.0442)
Gender	0.0221 (0.0128)	0.0222 (0.0125)	0.0163 (0.00598)	0.0166# (0.00558)	0.0473* (0.00504)	0.0473* (0.00514)	0.0488** (0.00230)	0.0490** (0.00229)
Education	0.0116 (0.0288)	0.0114 (0.0290)	0.0152 (0.0296)	0.0152 (0.0298)	0.0206 (0.0146)	0.0201 (0.0166)	0.0229 (0.0163)	0.0230 (0.0161)
Awareness EP	0.0295 (0.0228)	0.0307 (0.0200)	--	--	0.0448 (0.0300)	0.0457 (0.0283)	--	--
Interest in Politics	--	--	-0.0318 (0.0418)	-0.0316 (0.0427)	--	--	0.0340 (0.0364)	0.0336 (0.0360)
Weighted Exposure	0.0157 (0.0174)	0.0275 (0.0333)	0.0110 (0.0177)	0.0127 (0.0177)	0.0325* (0.00530)	0.0286 (0.0131)	0.0461** (0.00259)	0.0466** (0.00254)
EP Awareness * Weighted Exp.		-0.0234 (0.0237)				-0.00681 (0.0278)		
Interest Politics * Weighted Exp.				-0.0104 (0.0120)				0.00968 (0.0140)
Constant	-0.00116 (0.0414)	-0.00435 (0.0403)	-0.000702 (0.0462)	-0.00111 (0.0465)	-0.00447 (0.0417)	-0.00174 (0.0406)	-0.00374 (0.0454)	-0.00498 (0.0445)
Observations	2482	2482	2484	2484	3126	3126	3134	3134
R ²	0.343	0.344	0.342	0.342	0.430	0.430	0.429	0.429
AIC	6031.6	6030.1	6040.5	6040.2	7037.5	7037.3	7057.8	7057.3

Standard errors in parentheses; # p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

In sum, it is argued in the literature that citizens were more conscious about the negative consequences of the financial crisis for their personal life in 2014 (Baglioni and Hurrelmann, 2014; also Van Deth, 2011). The salience of EU politics increased which was expressed in greater Euroscepticism fuelling the rise of Anti-EU parties (Kriesi and Grande, 2014; Lubbers and Scheepers, 2010).

Recalling the descriptive results discussed earlier, the tone of reporting in 2014 is slightly more negative. In addition, we observe a drop in support for the EP as mirrored in descriptive EES survey results and an even sharper drop in citizens' evaluations of the economy. Connecting this to the literature on the topic, results for 2009 are still in line with the findings of Nardis' study of the 2004 EP elections (2015; also Norris, 2000). Results for 2014, however, show a different picture and corroborate the argument that the changed political context might be responsible for stronger effects.

Connecting our results to the literature, also De Vreese and Kandyla (2009) find that the susceptibility of risk frames relating to CFSP is increased when individuals fear globalisation. This relates back to our discussion about cognitive mechanisms in force during the first stage of decision-making: Emotions can influence the evaluation of information in the sense that they trigger a set of immediate concerns which is difficult to ignore and may even narrow the individual's cognitive capacities (Mintz and DeRouen, 2010: 100).

Concluding, the change in media effects seems more due to the change in the political context brought about by the financial crisis and its influence on public susceptibility of EU information as such – rather than different media contents. The crisis increased the, though apparently negative, publicity of the EP (Hüller, 2007). The legitimising potential of the EU's representation seems greater in the sense that information about it now seems to better reach citizens via the media. From a normative point of view, this is good news for European democracy that is diagnosed to lack public discourse (e.g., Trenz, 2004; also Nitoiu, 2013). But this also suggests that news with a slightly more negative slant fell on more fertile ground in 2014 and contributed to decrease support for the EP. And thus, news contents may actually erode the EP's legitimacy rather than contribute to its corroboration.

This chapter discussed the findings of our third and last empirical analysis. Having evaluated and contextualised our results, we now turn to summarise findings of the thesis and discuss their overall implications for the EP's legitimacy and the greater normative context of the EU's democratic deficit.

8 Conclusion: The Legitimation of the European Parliament

This concluding chapter provides an overview of our empirical results and the discussions they speak to. This concerns the research gaps we have identified earlier: While there are a few contributions regarding the visibility of the EP in the media or such that also take national parliaments into consideration (Gattermann, 2011, 2013; Gattermann and Vasilopoulou, 2015), effects of media contents have rarely been addressed (but see Nardis 2015 for a partial exception). We reflect on our findings against the background of the EU's legitimacy, the EP's importance for it and the discussions about news contents about the EP and their effects more generally. In addition, we critically assess shortcomings of the thesis and propose avenues to be addressed by future research. Concluding reflections, then, provide impulses for a future discussion of the organisation of parliamentary democracy in the EU.

8.1 Contributions and Findings of the Thesis

This thesis set out to assess the legitimation of the EP as observable in newspaper contents of election and routine periods in Finland, Germany and the United Kingdom. These countries were selected due to their variance in their domestic parliamentary traditions, different developments concerning their party systems during the financial crisis and, to a lesser extent, in the type of media systems.

We started out by discussing the meaning and implications of the EU's democratic deficit and the EP's central position in it concluding that one of its most fundamental aspects is a deficit in communication about EU politics. This was followed by an assessment of the actual empirical findings concerning communication by the EP, media coverage about it, and effects of media contents on public support. The discussion showed that, in general, literature on communication by or about the EP, or effects of such communication, is rather scarce. Consequently, we addressed these research gaps with questions aiming at (RQ1) identifying patterns in EP coverage, (RQ2) the comparative newsworthiness of the EP and national parliaments in EU affairs and their influence on each other regarding their visibility

in newspapers, and (RQ3) the effects of visibility and tone of EP newspaper contents on public support of it.

We then laid out the analytical foundations of the thesis by introducing an adapted PH-HI approach proposing that the individual's decision-making process is structured along two stages. While in the first stage, the individual identifies viable alternatives for a decision, the second stage, on the basis of the earlier identified set of alternatives, includes the calculation of costs and benefits taking environmental constraints into account (e.g., Mintz and DeRouen, 2010). Complementing the approach with HI, we incorporated the contingency of such constraints and the general uncertainty of the future into the model (e.g., Pierson, 2000a, 2000b). In sum, we concluded that individuals are constrained at three levels, namely at the micro level in the form of cognitive predispositions, at the meso level in the form of institutional constraints, and at the macro level because of the contingency of reality as such.

To be able to enrich the content-free basic model of decision-making, we then discussed the three different environments to collect contextualising information. We zoomed in on the normative expectations formulated towards the actors under discussion (MEPs, journalists, and citizens); we looked at the structural conditions constraining and incentivising rational actors and discussed literature on cognitive predispositions. In a concluding chapter, we drew all results together and, following the original PH approach, identified relevant dimensions of decision-making. We combined these dimensions with the basic model of the process of political communication (McNair, 2011) resulting in an overarching analytical framework for the study of the EP's legitimization.

Overall, we believe that we created a useful and original theoretical foundation for the study of the EP's legitimization that can connect different disciplines and thereby create a more complex and insightful picture of processes underlying the EP's communication and its effects. Since the approach combines cognitive approaches with rational choice, it may serve well as an overarching roof under which an interdisciplinary framework for the study of the EP's legitimization can develop. In addition, the approach connects elements from political

and communication science and in doing this, reconciles the two disciplines that the study of political communication touches upon.

Regarding our empirical results, we found increased coverage for election periods in contrast to routine periods in which newspapers tended to feature the EP to a much lesser degree. However, a closer look revealed that the majority of EP news was characterised by a national focus concerning the actors and contexts discussed. 'Genuine' EP news featuring politics at EU level were rarer but were found to be most evenly distributed across election and routine periods in comparison to nationally-oriented articles. Thus, it seems that while elections increased news visibility, they mostly increased talk of empty politics and campaigning at the national level. Country differences were found, too: Of the three countries in the sample, German coverage was found to be the most Europeanised as it covered either other member states (horizontal Europeanisation) or the EU level (vertical Europeanisation) to a greater extent than the two others. Finnish election coverage actually decreased in 2014 since in 2009 discussion was much greater due to the first successes of the Finns Party. In addition, in contrast to the other two countries in the sample, UK papers ignored the EP as a topic almost entirely in routine periods.

From other studies we know that the legitimisation discourse regarding the EU as a whole is rather undifferentiated referring to 'the EU' instead of focussing on single institutions (Hurrelmann et al., 2009, 2012). The finding was corroborated by the results of our legitimisation statement analysis which yielded an extremely low number of statements. Public discourse about the only directly-elected institution of a regime suffering from a massive democratic deficit, thus, was found to be rather underdeveloped. If we connect this finding to the results of Lord and Tamvaki (2013), we may conclude that the overall higher quality of discourse measured in EP debates with their elaborate exchange of arguments and justifications given is not mirrored in newspaper contents. The EP, therefore, is found to have a generally low newsworthiness.

This finding was confirmed by results from our second empirical analysis in which we looked at the comparative visibility of parliaments in the EU. Taking the perceptions of journalists as

a point of departure, we defined three possible modes of interparliamentary relationships derived from the literature discussing interparliamentary relations (Benz, 2016; Crum and Fossum, 2009, 2013; Maurer, 2009; Kiiver, 2006). In addition, we took parliamentary activities as a proxy of parliaments' active legitimization efforts and possible triggers of coverage. In sum, we found that journalists apparently perceive the activities of their domestic parliament in EU affairs as more newsworthy than activities of the EP. It also showed that journalists see parliaments in the EU mostly as complementary branches that become active in EU politics at different points in time: This was concluded from the finding that both parliaments were almost never covered together; in addition, activities of the EP had a stable effect on EP coverage and the same was true for NPs' activities and their effect on NPs' visibility in EU affairs. Effects pointing at mutual influences of EP activities on NPs' coverage or vice versa were found to be rather indirect and should, therefore, be further investigated in future research.

Our last empirical chapter focussed on the effects of media contents about the EP on public support for it. The results showed strong disparities between the two elections investigated. In 2009, only such citizens were affected by media contents that remembered reading about EP elections in the newspapers. In addition, effects only occurred regarding the sheer visibility of the EP without considering the tone of coverage. While the significance levels of these effects remained rather low, this meant that only citizens with a certain level of awareness of the EP were affected – but obviously it was this awareness that made them immune to how the media evaluated what they reported about. In 2014, the picture had changed considerably. While the actual amount or tone of coverage did not seem to differ that much, effects became stronger and direct. In line with earlier research, coefficients of media effects were quite small (Hobolt and De Vries, 2016). Still, newspaper reporting made a, if even small, difference in 2014.

Empirical results highlight the salience of the financial crisis as a topic of discussion within articles and a raiser of awareness for the EP and European politics. But they also underscore the second-order nature of the EP: Discourse about it seems to be depleted; it is less

newsworthy than national parliaments in EU affairs; in addition, the actual news contents seem to have a direct effect, most probably due to changed circumstances – rather than the increased competencies of the EP, for example. It seems that the possibilities of EU citizens to get information about their elected representatives' work, to learn about policy choices discussed in EP debates, or to get to see how their interests are represented at EU level in general is limited due to the limited publicity of the EP.

Reconnecting to normative expectations of democratic governance, this lack of communication and publicity can then hardly be thought to contribute to maintaining the legitimating idea of the authority of the people(s) that are responsively represented by elected and trustworthy agents. Our findings mirror the results of research on the EU as such to a great extent. Thus, the parliament as the directly-elected representation of citizens and core institution of democracy does not anyhow stick out in a climate of Euroscepticism and the ongoing heated debate about the democratic deficit. Rather, the EP seems to be mixed in the overall EU discussion which, as has been found earlier, is quite undifferentiated (e.g., Hurrelmann et al., 2012).

It does not seem surprising that even with a strong, directly-elected parliament, citizens realising the (hard) consequences of cooperation in the elite project EU, may have a hard time accepting them: They may perceive outcomes of political decisions as unexpected, not made transparent and, therefore, unjustified by political elites, react with scepticism and protest since this perceived opaque rule by a few and the perceived ignorance of citizens' interests is found illegitimate – which is exactly what we have witnessed in these times of crisis (e.g., Hobolt and Tilley, 2016; Kriesi and Pappas, 2015). In sum, the weak link between citizens and their parliament can be explained by a lack of publicity. However, this seems to be a mirror of more general problems that citizens, journalists, and elites themselves encounter with the EP. Before reflecting on the broader implications of these findings, we take a look at shortcomings of the thesis to consider the robustness of results and propose avenues for future research.

8.2 Shortcomings and Avenues for Future Research

There are several aspects of the EP's legitimisation process that could not be addressed in this thesis or that constrain the potential to generalise from our findings which is mainly due to a lack of resources and time limitations. This is mainly connected to our sample. While attempting to maintain the overall manageability of the data collection, we have selected our sample against the background of maximising the diversity of cases on certain variables (see chapter 4.2). We have done so against the background of our broader research interest which is the legitimisation of the EP. The main variable in this respect was the domestic parliamentary tradition which undoubtedly differs to a great extent between the three selected countries and includes three exemplary cases.

Still, our sample does not comprise any Central or Eastern European (CEE) countries where EU coverage, for example, has been found to be more extensive than in Western countries (e.g., De Vreese et al., 2006). It would show a more complete picture of EP legitimisation to include such countries to see if our results also hold in Central and Eastern Europe. In addition, the analysis is not able to capture longer term changes of effects since we relied on a cross-sectional design. In sum, a larger sample spanning more member states, longer time periods or more time points would increase the robustness of our results and allow making a stronger claim towards generalisation.

Data availability has posed some constraints on our research. Due to the fact that data collected in the PACE project comprised only the years of 2010-2013, we could not consider the comparative visibility of the EP and national parliaments outside this period, i.e., for EP elections. In turn, we could not assess media effects outside the EP election context due to the lack of available survey data comparable across the three countries. In this respect, we also could not test the comparative media effects of contents about national parliaments and the EP.

Regarding our PH-HI approach and the regression analysis of parliaments' comparative visibility, it would have been useful to include data on journalists' individual predispositions and their stance towards, for example, their national parliament. However, survey data on

journalists' individual attitudes are rather rare and usually limited to a short time frame or a limited number of countries (see, e.g., Brüggemann et al., 2014). Thinking on a larger scale, it would be interesting and helpful to include a journalist study in other, already existing surveys such as the EES which we have used in this thesis, or other large survey projects such as the EB or the European Social Survey. In doing this, it would allow researchers to develop a full picture of the legitimization process regarding the EU. Lacking this type of data, however, we included dummy variables for different countries and outlets and in doing this, used a proxy for differences concerning underlying logics and expectations across these groups. We could have included aggregate data from the EB survey to at least control for effects of public opinion on journalists' evaluations. However, the variance of these variables would have been extremely low given the short period of analysis and we, therefore, did not consider them.

Another limitation is related to the financial crisis that was not a main concern of the thesis but must, given the time frame, still be assumed to have an influence. Accordingly, we have found that it plays a fundamental role to explain outcomes. Yet, we have not taken the crisis into account in our case selection in the form of, for example, debtor and donor countries. To produce more robust results with regard to the crisis and its moderating effects, future research should consider this to a greater extent. It should also try to encompass earlier periods in time to compare with times of crisis. Expanding the time frame in general would also allow making more informed assessments about how EP communication developed and how the EP's empowerment is mirrored in public communication about it – a question that is partly addressed in Gattermann (2011, 2013). Longer time periods may also yield more legitimization statements which would in turn allow making a more informed assessment if the coding scheme developed by Hurrelmann et al. indeed has to be adapted for analysing the EP individually.

Methodologically, the thesis took a rather quantitative stance. Even though we took legitimacy frames as a more qualitative assessment into account, the analysis of these frames revealed that the discourse about the EP seems not rich enough in this respect to

actually yield a robust basis for interpretation. Maybe a more inductive approach could help to identify qualitative patterns in discourse that were not detected in our analysis here. Moreover, especially the analysis of the comparative visibility of NPs and the EP should be extended to a more qualitative research framework to allow for a more fine-grained interpretation about how newsmakers see both levels in comparison.

Lastly, while we have taken the communication by parliaments into account as independent variables regarding debates, questions, and press releases, future research could be dedicated to compare between the two parliamentary levels, for example, between EP debates and debates in national plenaries. In doing this, we could gain a deeper understanding of, e.g., the quality of discourse at both levels (as partly addressed in Lord and Tamvaki, 2013), the network of actors involved in debates, the justifications given or more specifically, the conceptions of legitimacy of the EP or the EU as such that are communicated by speakers and if and how they differ at different political levels. Notwithstanding these shortcomings, the thesis yielded some interesting results. We reflect upon their societal implications in the following.

8.3 Concluding Reflections

Against the background of our findings, citizens do not seem to get much information about their parliament at EU level which seriously constrains the legitimising potential of the EP. This may be explained by the decreased importance of parliaments as arenas of (national) decision-making in societies in which decisions are increasingly taken beyond national borders (Negrine, 1999; Marschall, 2009). However, the EP is a supranational parliament which is actively involved in legislating beyond national borders and which has been empowered to be an equal partner of the Council in most policy fields of the EU. The argument of parliaments' low newsworthiness, thus, cannot seem to explain our results.

International politics is generally removed from citizens' lives and they are, therefore, usually less informed in this respect. Reconnecting also to arguments advanced in the discussion about the democratic deficit, the reasons for its decreased newsworthiness seem

to lie in the remoteness and also difference of the EP from traditional – thus national – parliaments. These disparities result in difficulties in explaining and comprehending it. Research has, therefore, found that journalists and citizens alike resort to national proxies that may serve as template for explaining the EP (Gattermann, 2011, 2013) or to bridge a lack of knowledge (Anderson, 1998; De Vries et al., 2011; Kritzing, 2003). Ironically then, while the EP as a parliamentary institution seems comparably easy to understand since citizens know it from the national context, it may be exactly this only seeming similarity that contributes to maintaining the remoteness of the EP from its constituency.

This is because '[p]sychologically, the EU is too different from the domestic democratic institutions that citizens are used to' (Follesdal and Hix, 2006: 536). Accordingly, also our analyses show the great influence of domestic politics and especially the parliamentary tradition. Inferring from this, the EP is explained by using very different national templates – the case selection in this thesis mirrors these different national traditions. If this is the easiest way to explain the EP because it is otherwise just too different and too complex to understand, then it seems hard to imagine that an overarching, homogeneous picture of the EP could actually develop. How could the EP be alike the Bundestag, the Eduskunta, or the House of Commons at the same time? The dilemma is captured by Beetham who states that '[r]ules of power will lack legitimacy to the extent that they cannot be justified in terms of *shared beliefs*' (Beetham, 1991: 17; emphasis added).

In a nutshell, it seems the EP is perceived as an EU institution rather than a singular manifestation of the principle of democratic representation on the one hand. On the other hand, the remoteness of the EP lets citizens resort to their perceptions of this principle in general as learnt in the national context. Overall, then, regarding its public image, the EP seems stuck somewhere in a cognitive twilight zone between perceptions of the EU as such and attitudes towards the principle of (national) representation. In accordance with this, we concluded that the role of the EP is, in line with earlier research, found to be more of a passive, second-order one – less newsworthy than NPs with media effects of information about it depending on political circumstances. This stands in contrast to its successful active

self-empowerment vis-à-vis the executives at EU level. As a controlling parliament at EU level with an aggregate clout over national governments in the Council, the EP has become one of the most powerful parliaments in the world. Its constitutional functions, or governments-oriented functions, thus, are very developed and successfully exercised.

It seems that, with its initial installation as a controlling body with 'executive' powers (Rittberger, 2014), the EP has followed a rather persistent path despite the remarkable development it has made. Its weaknesses lie in the normative, citizen-related parliamentary functions constrained by the remoteness from its constituency. National parliaments seem to be more successful in this respect. Against this background, it could be useful to reflect on a division of labour between the two levels in the future: The EP could continue being a controlling parliament (Dann, 2002, 2003). It could be defined as a parliamentary branch fulfilling more government(s)-oriented functions of supranational representation. NPs, then, could increase the input legitimacy of European politics by focusing more on their communication function in EU affairs: to debate EU politics in their plenaries, invite MEPs to speak or simply work towards a closer collaboration of national parliaments transnationally. This would support calls for a stronger emphasis of NP's communication function in EU affairs (e.g., Auel, 2007; Wendler, 2016): Through their public activities, NPs could help to increase public attention for European politics and thereby contribute to enhance its legitimacy. In the EU's representative democracy, the EP would then be integrated as a 'constitutional parliamentary arm' at EU level while NPs would perform normative functions in EU affairs due to their greater proximity to citizens and their, therefore, increased newsworthiness.

In this sense, the argument roughly follows the pragmatic reasoning of public sphere research in which it is established to talk about Europeanised *national* public spheres rather than one overarching European discourse (e.g., Kleinen-von Königsłow, 2012; Koopmans and Erbe, 2004;): Even if over the course of integration and especially with the multiple crises the EU is going through, the salience of EU topics has increased, the national angle is found to prevail (Van der Brug and De Vreese, 2016a: 278/279). This has led scholars to reintegrate

national borders in their reflections of the public sphere. While there is no institutionalised EU media that could be regarded a counterpart to the EP in the discussion about a European public sphere, the prevalence of the national angle could nonetheless be perceived to constitute a viable channel that could be used to enhance legitimacy rather than defining it as a problem. Strengthening NPs in EU affairs would then strengthen parliamentary democracy as such with parliamentary functions shared across different levels.

Notwithstanding the organisation of parliamentary relations in the EU, the analysis of media effects shows that the politicisation of the EU may have increased the impact of newspaper contents on citizens' opinions about the EP. In itself, this would mean that EP communication is indeed reaching its constituency at home. This would, from a normative point of view, be a desirable development perceived as the successful creation of publicity for the EP through stronger public contestation (e.g., De Wilde, 2009; Statham and Trenz, 2013). Because even if we expected the EP to focus more on its control functions, it would still represent EU citizens and be constituted by direct elections which would still require citizens to have a basic idea of what the EP does. However, given the overall decreased public support of the EP and the intense contestation of the EU, increased salience apparently contributes to the erosion of EP legitimacy rather than fostering it. Overall, the crises seem to have opened a window of opportunity for the EP to reach its citizens but it remains to be seen if this going to help or hamper the legitimation of the EP or EU politics.

In sum, the thesis gives reason to believe that a however formed stronger connection of EP and NPs could contribute to improving the legitimacy of EU politics by means of parliamentary representation. Several difficulties may be encountered on this train of thought. First of all, there is potential of competition between the two levels and, therefore, competencies should be defined more carefully in the future; in this respect also the rights of national parliaments in EU affairs should be organised in a more homogenous manner. In addition, even as a 'mere' controlling parliament, the EP would need the backing by its electorate and thus, needs voters to turn out at elections. If voter turnout for the EP keeps on decreasing, it might be worth thinking about reforms of the actual election procedures.

Such could, for example, include the complementation of citizens' ballots with those of national experts, e.g., MPs. In doing this, a certain level of legitimation could be ensured. However, any kind of reform has proven difficult to achieve in the EU since a broad array of interests of (still) 28 member states has to be aggregated. In addition, the stronger link to the national level may fuel a nationalisation of EU politics in a time in which nationalist tendencies have led to a revival of ideas that diametrically oppose the democratic ideal of the equality of human beings.

Notwithstanding possible difficulties, however, the democratic mirage that was nourished by the idea of a strong EP compensating the loss of parliamentary competencies at the national level seems a mirage because it is unrealistic to reach. Standards of legitimacy and expectations of what the EP is supposed to achieve should, therefore, become more pragmatic and orient themselves more towards the reality of EU citizens since it is highly unlikely that the EP will come close to the status of national parliaments in terms of public support in the near future. Therefore, the question 'whether Parliament does or can help legitimize the EU in the manner attributed to elected legislatures in other contexts' (Hix et al., 2003: 197) leads us to join pleas for a stronger involvement of NPs in EU affairs to complement supranational parliamentary power in the EU. Overall, the discussion would in our view benefit from a redefinition of prerequisites adapted to a multilevel supranational polity in the making. To not lose national borders as a crucial point of reference without nourishing nationalist, populist ideas, may then well be the greatest challenge ahead.

Concluding, the discussion about how to ultimately increase the legitimacy of democratic EU politics remains an open one. It will continue to stimulate further research and a fundamental discussion of how to deal with the challenges of governance beyond the nation state. The accumulating crises of the EU seem to indicate that a 'make it or break it' point might be reached sooner or later and developments like the Brexit referendum and the United Kingdom leaving the Union seem to tip the balance in the direction of the latter. Still, in accordance with our analytical framework, also the future of the EU as such is contingent

and an unintended consequence of Brexit may just as well be a stronger cooperation between remaining member states with an (at least slightly) greater common denominator.

The study at hand has shed some light on the discussion about the EP's news visibility, also in comparison with NPs, and the potential of news contents to influence citizens' opinions. In doing this, it does not only enhance the discussion about the EP's legitimation process but also the EU's democratic deficit in general. With the persistence of the EU, the role of the EP in it will remain an important point of discussion. With the persistence of democracy, namely, 'parliament ... [will continue] to attract lively controversy since [t]he institution seems to be one of the most enduring and widely applicable inventions of political man' (Loewenberg, 1971: 19).

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Appendix

Figure A1: Chapter 5: Mention of Other Member States in EP Coverage

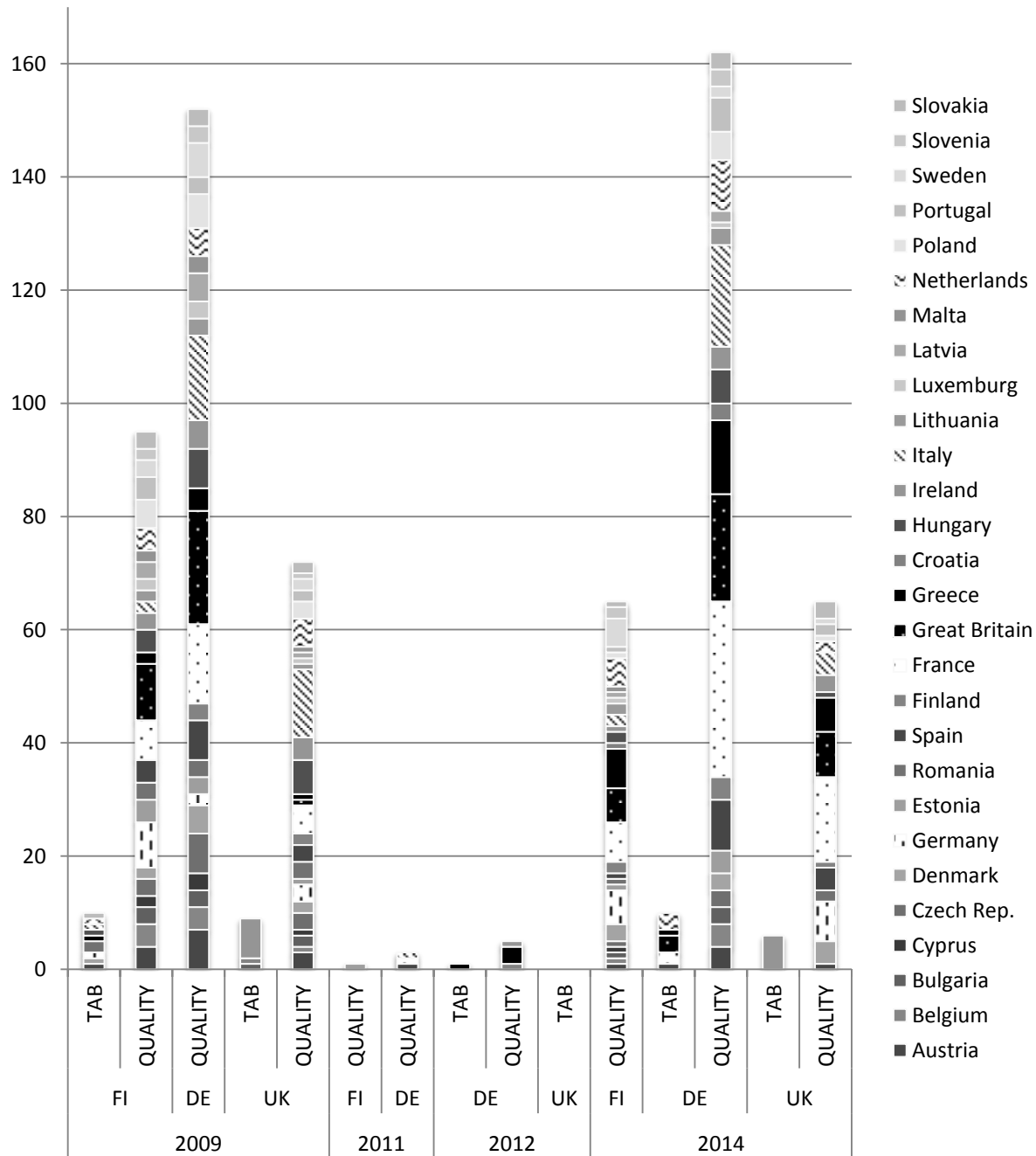


Figure A2: Chapter 5: Genres of Newspaper Articles about the EP

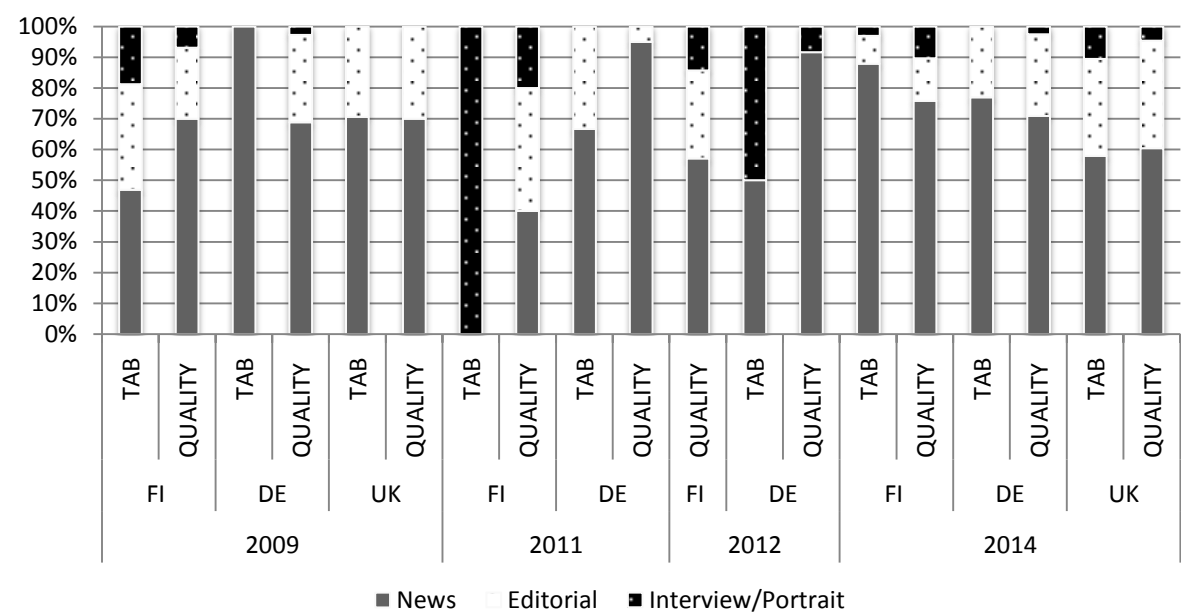


Figure A3: Chapter 5: Ressorts of Newspaper Articles about the EP

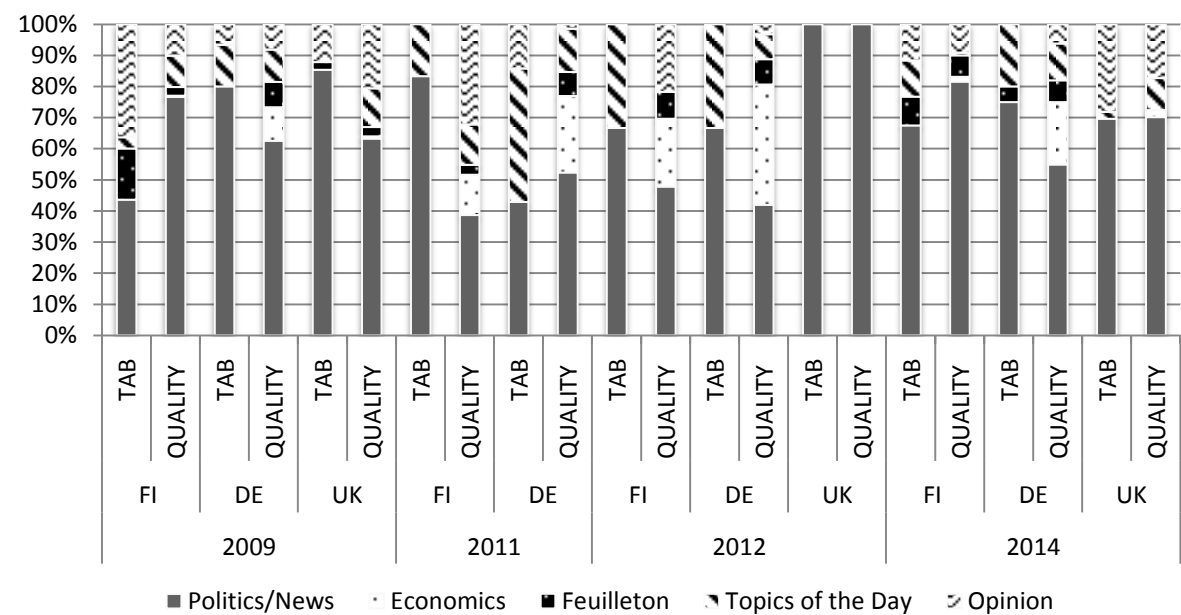


Figure A4: Chapter 5: Tone of Newspaper Articles Covering the EP as a Main Topic

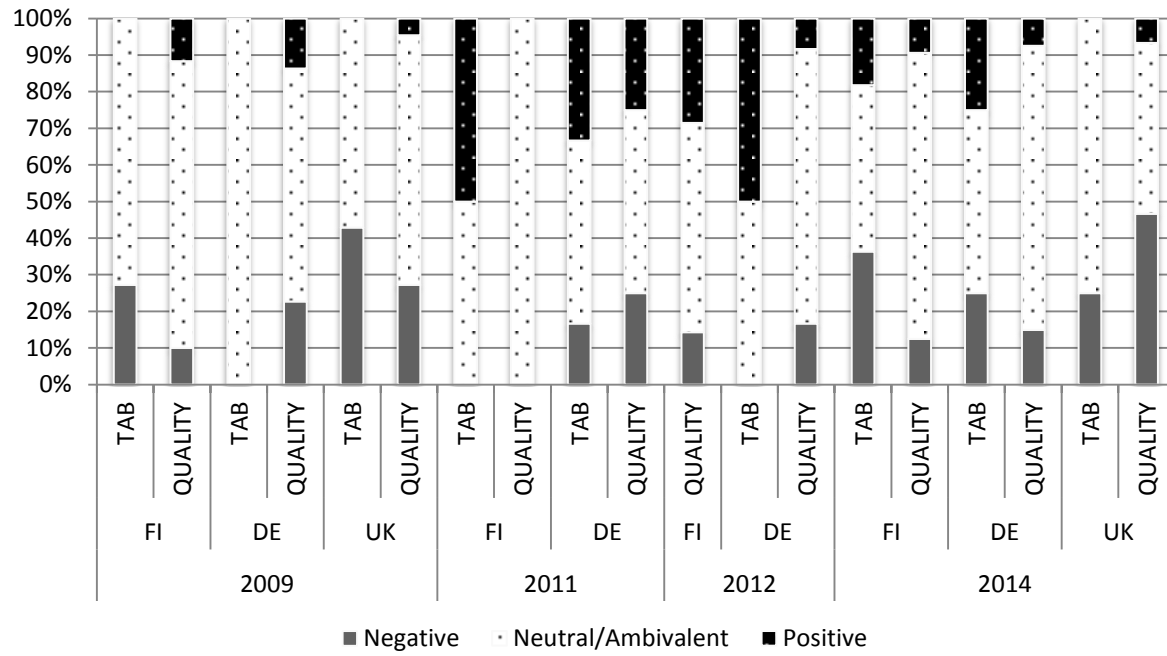


Figure A5: Chapter 5: Amount and Tone of Legitimacy Statements about the EP by EP and Non-EP Actors

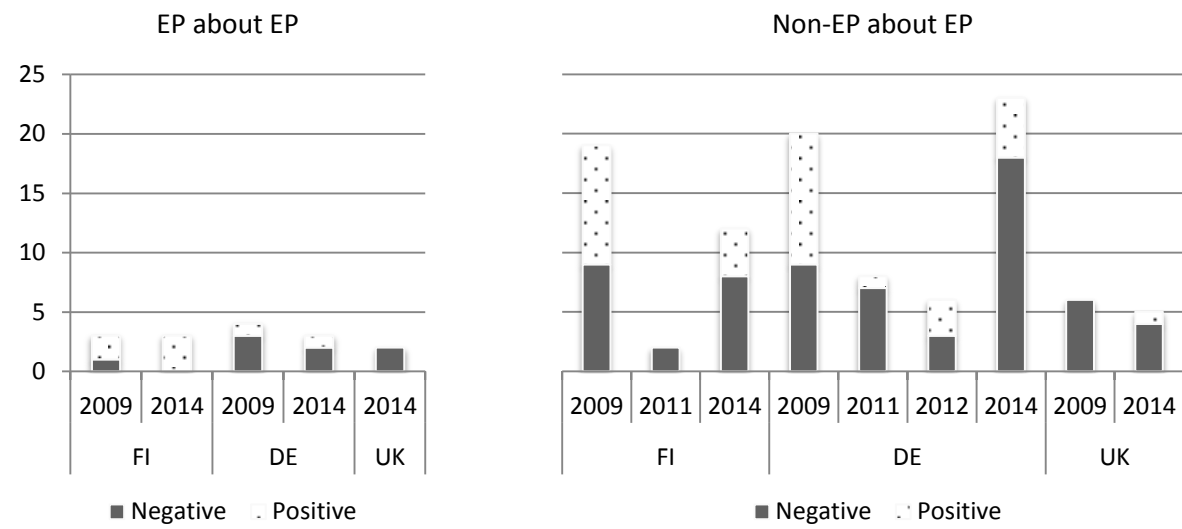


Figure A6: Chapter 5: Speakers of Legitimacy Statements about the EP without EP Actors

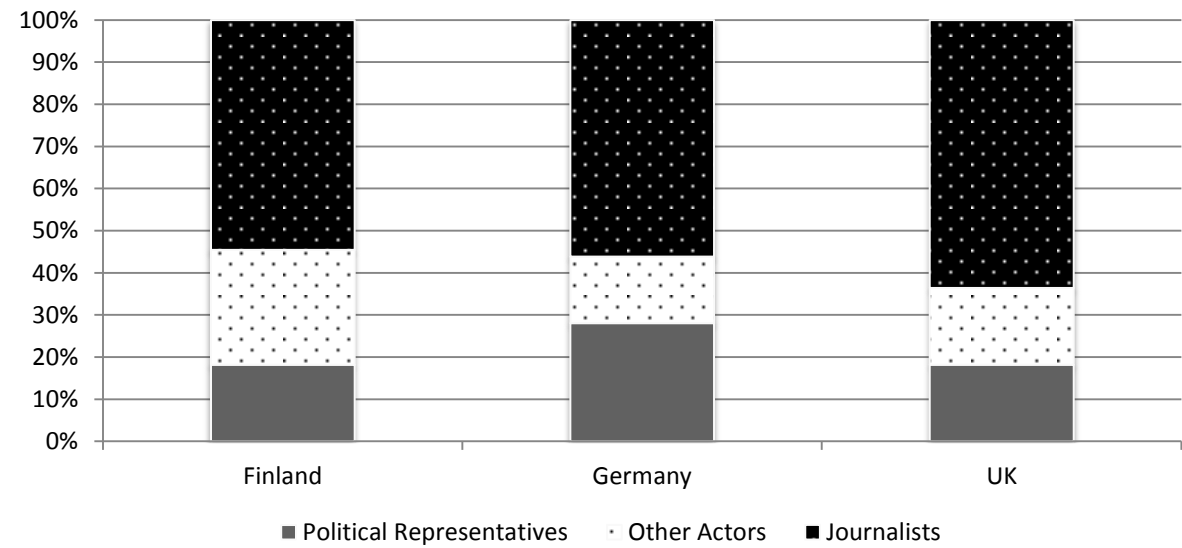
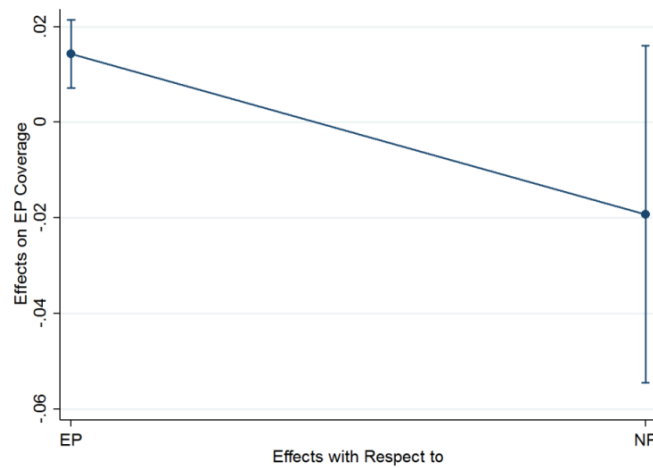


Figure A7: Chapter 6: Average Marginal Effects Plots after Negative Binomial Regression: Effects of Press Releases on EP Coverage and NP Coverage

Marginal Effects of Press Releases on EP Coverage (at means)



Marginal Effects of Press Releases on NP Coverage (at means)

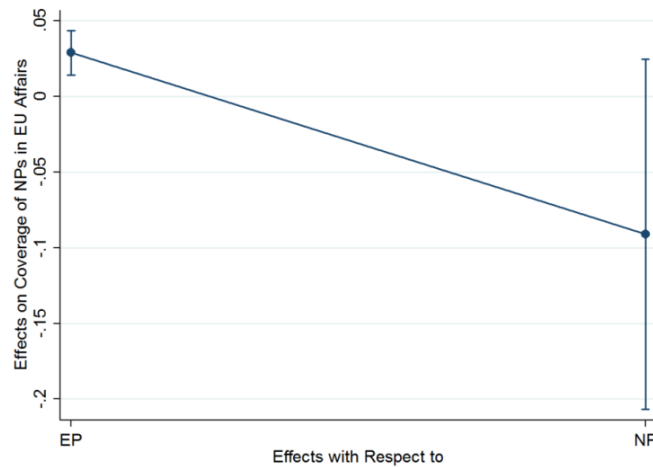
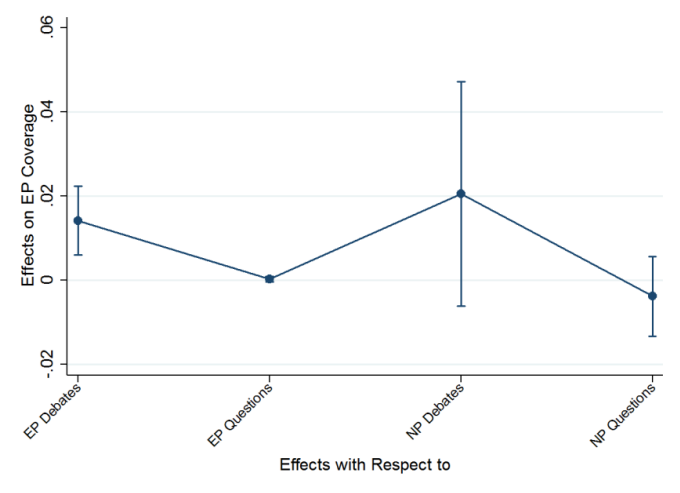


Figure A8: Chapter 6: Average Marginal Effects Plots after Negative Binomial Regression: Effects of Debates and Questions on EP Coverage and NP Coverage

Marginal Effects of Debates and Questions on EP and NP Coverage (at means)



Marginal Effects of Debates and Questions on NP Coverage (at means)

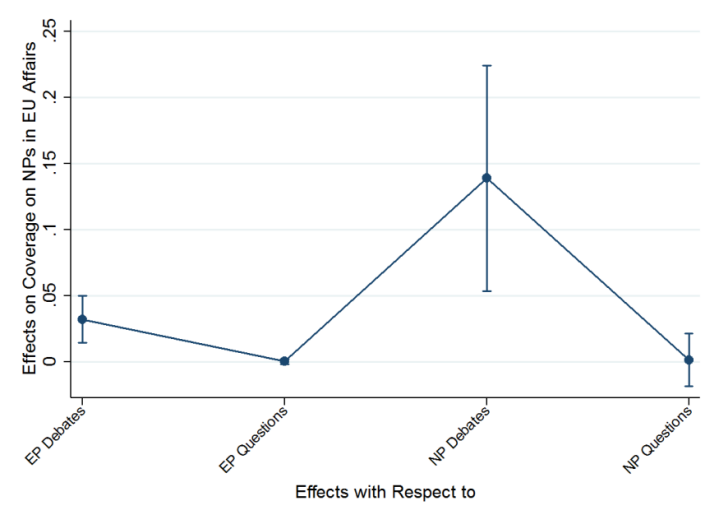


Figure A9: Chapter 7: Marginal Effects Plot for the Effect of EP News Exposure on EP Attitude (Interaction Term with 'Have you read about EP elections in the news?' (EP Awareness))

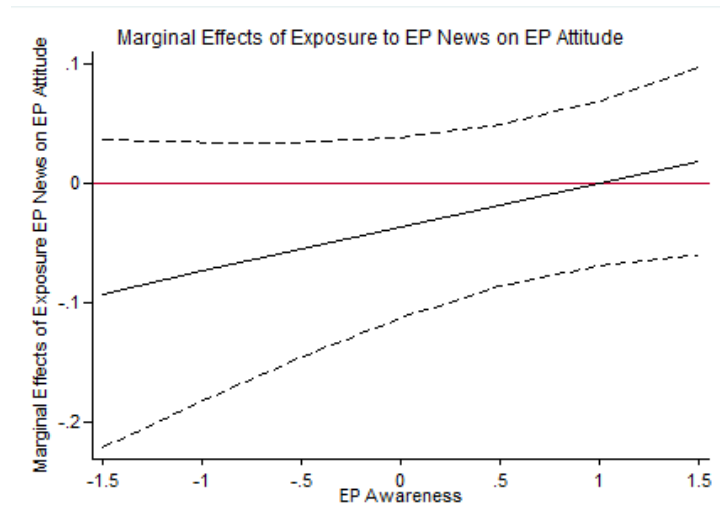


Table A1: Chapter 5: Coding Scheme for Legitimation Statements

LEGITIMATION STATEMENTS (only coded for EP actors, NOT election actors!); coded for ALL articles regardless of scope				Kripp. α
OBJECT	OBJECT	Specify the actor/institution about whom the statement is made	11 = Individual MEP 12 = Groupings of MEPs (party groups, non-specified groups) 13 = EP as a whole	0.93
OBJECT SUBJECT	OBJECT String	Specify in words	String (Name, Function)	
	SUBJECT	Specify who is making the statement	1: EP actors 11 = Individual MEP 12 = Groupings of MEPs (party groups, non-specified groups) 13 = EP as a whole 2: Non-EP political representatives EU Context (e.g., Barroso in the FAZ), Domestic Context (e.g., Angela Merkel in the FAZ), Other EU MS Context (e.g., David Cameron in the FAZ), International/Non-EU Context (e.g., Barack Obama in the FAZ) 3: Actors not representing an institution (if none of above applies) 31 = Journalist 3 = Non-political actors mentioned with function/title (like Cardinal Woelki or companies), citizens	0.7
SUBJECT +/- Evaluation	SUBJECT String	Specify in words	String (Name, Function)	
	TONE	Underlying Tonality	0 = negative 1 = positive	0.7
EVALUATION CRITERION	ROOT	Rooted in democratic theory?	0 = cannot identify 1 = democratic 2 = non-democratic	0.33
EVALUATION CRITERION	LEGIT	Legitimacy of EP: Emphasis on input (procedures and processes) or output (results of processes)	0 = cannot identify 1 = input 2 = output	0.54
	ROOTLEGIT	Hurrelmann Matrix	See Table provided on page 133.	0.46

Table A2: Chapter 5: Underlying Justifications Given in Negative and Positive Legitimation Statements

	Negative			Positive			
	MEP	Groupings of MEPs	EP	MEP	Groupings of MEPs	EP	Total
<i>Rooted in Democratic Understanding / Stressing Input Legitimacy</i>							
Popular Sovereignty	0	1	2	0	1	4	8
Participation	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Legality	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Transparency	3	0	9	1	0	0	13
Credibility	4	1	4	1	0	0	10
Deliberation	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
<i>Rooted in Non-Democratic Understanding / Stressing Input Legitimacy</i>							
Charismatic Leadership	7	2	3	12	1	1	26
Expertocratic Leadership	0	0	0	2	0	1	3
Tradition	1	0	0	0	0	1	2
Moderation	9	2	1	0	0	1	13
<i>Rooted in Democratic Understanding / Stressing Output Legitimacy</i>							
Protection of Hum. Rights	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Contrib. to Public Good	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
<i>Rooted in Non-Democratic Understanding / Stressing Output Legitimacy</i>							
Effectiveness	0	4	6	1	0	2	13
Identity	0	0	3	1	0	1	5
Stability	0	0	0	0	1	3	4
Distributive Justice	2	1	0	0	0	0	3
Good Internat'l Standing	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Efficiency	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total	27	13	33	18	4	16	110

Table A3: Chapter 6: Correlations of Independent Variables

	EP			NP	
	Debates	Questions	PRs	Debates	Questions
EP Questions	0.2163 0.0000	1.000			
EP Press Releases	0.4913 0.0000	0.5871 0.0000	1.000		
NP Debates	0.0781 0.0500	0.1135 0.0044	0.2552 0.0000	1.000	
NP Questions	-0.0099 0.8044	-0.0357 0.3708	-0.0026 0.9487	0.0042 0.9153	1.000
NP Press Releases	-0.0210 0.5981	0.1571 0.0001	0.1588 0.0001	0.2425 0.0000	0.0601 0.1321

Table A4: Chapter 6: Overview of Descriptive Statistics of Independent Variables Aggregated by Day

	Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
European Parliament	Debates	648	1.611111	2.753668	0	10
	Questions	648	39.93056	31.19891	0	112
	Press Releases	648	3.527778	3.48268	0	14
National Parliaments' Activities by Country (N=3x216)						
FI - Eduskunta	Debates	216	.0833333	.3234983	0	2
	Questions	216	0	0	0	0
	Press Releases	216	.2361111	.4256778	0	1
DE - Bundestag	Debates	216	.2083333	.7269721	0	4
	Questions	216	1.277778	2.756247	0	14
	Press Releases	216	.3472222	.60601	0	2
UK - House of Commons	Debates	216	.0277778	.1647173	0	1
	Questions	216	1.736111	3.892723	0	28
	Press Releases	216	.1388889	.4194866	0	2

Table A5: Chapter 6: Overview of Descriptive Statistics of Dependent Variables Aggregated by Day

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
EP Articles	648	.5848765	1.189425	0	8
NP Articles	648	.4135802	.8515469	0	6

Table A6: Chapter 6: Negative Binomial Regression for Finnish Coverage Individually

	EP Coverage		NP Coverage	
	Legislative	Media	Legislative	Media
EP Debates	0.100** (0.0385)		0.177*** (0.0520)	
EP Questions	-0.00486 (0.00412)		-0.00168 (0.00569)	
NP Debates	0.519# (0.289)		0.464 (0.391)	
NP Questions	0 (.)		0 (.)	
EP Press Rel.		0.0440 (0.0316)		0.116** (0.0407)
NP Press Rel.		0.224 (0.263)		0.0462 (0.350)
Tabloid	-1.560*** (0.355)	-1.532*** (0.353)	-1.223** (0.386)	-1.201** (0.388)
Constant	-0.490* (0.205)	-0.651*** (0.189)	-1.056*** (0.284)	-1.164*** (0.263)
Overdispersion param. Constant	-0.664 (0.519)	-0.467 (0.474)	0.461 (0.359)	0.622# (0.335)
Observations	210	210	210	210
Pseudo R^2	0.088	0.066	0.074	0.053
AIC	371.7	378.3	331.0	336.4
BIC	391.8	395.0	351.0	353.2

Standard errors in parentheses; # $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A7: Chapter 6: Negative Binomial Regression for German Coverage Individually

	EP Coverage		NP Coverage	
	Legislative	Media	Legislative	Media
EP Debates	0.0899*** (0.0250)	--	0.0619 (0.0427)	--
EP Questions	0.00536* (0.00257)	--	0.000613 (0.00423)	--
NP Debates	0.0692 (0.0859)	--	0.372** (0.129)	--
NP Questions	-0.0123 (0.0313)	--	0.0180 (0.0454)	--
EP Press Rel.	--	0.120*** (0.0183)	--	0.0826* (0.0338)
NP Press Rel.	--	-0.245* (0.125)	--	-0.227 (0.219)
Tabloid	-1.771*** (0.240)	-1.764*** (0.236)	-1.233*** (0.320)	-1.219*** (0.322)
Constant	0.133 (0.155)	0.123 (0.117)	-0.673** (0.247)	-0.636** (0.197)
Overdispersion param. Constant	-1.387*** (0.407)	-1.847** (0.562)	-0.216 (0.402)	-0.0601 (0.371)
Observations	210	210	210	210
Pseudo R^2	0.132	0.152	0.067	0.054
AIC	582.7	565.7	398.7	400.3
BIC	606.2	582.5	422.1	417.0

Standard errors in parentheses; # $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A8: Chapter 6: Negative Binomial Regression for British Coverage Individually

	EP Coverage		NP Coverage	
	Legislative	Media	Legislative	Media
EP Debates	0.168 (0.213)	--	0.0312 (0.0458)	--
EP Questions	-0.0100 (0.0205)	--	-0.000355 (0.00433)	--
NP Debates	-19.79 (56207.4)	--	0.404 (0.655)	--
NP Questions	-14.98 (2237.2)	--	-0.00235 (0.0348)	--
EP Press Rel.	--	-0.0310 (0.176)	--	0.0422 (0.0348)
NP Press Rel.	--	-15.35 (4117.8)	--	-0.811# (0.473)
Tabloid	-19.99 (17923.7)	-16.69 (3429.9)	-0.508# (0.301)	-0.509# (0.299)
Constant	-3.258*** (0.827)	-3.623*** (0.783)	-1.021*** (0.238)	-1.054*** (0.200)
Overdispersion param. Constant	-65.49 (.)	-65.49 (.)	-0.857 (0.867)	-1.015 (0.959)
Observations	210	210	210	210
Pseudo R^2	0.194	0.101	0.012	0.025
AIC	37.37	36.30	321.1	313.2
BIC	57.45	49.69	344.5	330.0

Standard errors in parentheses; # $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A9: Chapter 6: Overview of Dependent Variables Used for Robustness Checks

	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max	No. of Art. Main Topic	All Articles
<i>Neg. Binomial Regression Models</i>							
EP Main Topic	648	.1790123	.5821064	0	5	116	379
NP Main Topic	648	.1635802	.4695693	0	3	106	268
<i>Logit Regression Models</i>							
EP Logit	648	.3040123	.4603432	0	1		
NP Logit	648	.2731481	.4459205	0	1		

Table A10: Chapter 6: Negative Binomial Regression: Effects of Legislative and Media Activities on Articles Covering EP or NPs as Main Topic

	EP		NP	
	Legislative	Media	Legislative	Media
EP Debates	0.117** (0.0370)	--	0.0904* (0.0356)	--
EP Questions	0.00597 (0.00384)	--	0.00239 (0.00387)	--
NP Debates	0.162 (0.137)	--	0.565*** (0.139)	--
NP Questions	-0.156 (0.0928)	--	0.0318 (0.0388)	--
EP Press Rel.	--	0.147*** (0.0301)	--	0.0956** (0.0291)
NP Press Rel.	--	-0.159 (0.214)	--	-0.357 (0.249)
Dummy FI	17.65 (1437.3)	17.05 (937.1)	0.933** (0.311)	0.964** (0.304)
Dummy DE	18.85 (1437.3)	18.16 (937.1)	0.503 (0.318)	0.787* (0.315)
Dummy Tabloid	-1.124*** (0.302)	-1.072*** (0.300)	-0.865** (0.278)	-0.852** (0.281)
Constant	-19.97 (1437.3)	-19.44 (937.1)	-2.600*** (0.326)	-2.575*** (0.288)
Overdispersion Parameter				
Constant	0.0608 (0.392)	0.0417 (0.404)	-0.155 (0.548)	0.256 (0.435)
Observations	630	630	630	630
Pseudo R^2	0.205	0.200	0.078	0.054

Standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; note that due to the inclusion of time lags, the number of observations is reduced by 18: 1 day per year and newspaper.

Table A11: Chapter 6: Logistic Regression: Effects of Activities on Days in a Newspaper with Coverage (=1)

	EP		NP	
	Legislative	Media	Legislative	Media
EP Debates	0.136** (0.0424)	--	0.0906** (0.0327)	--
EP Questions	-0.00150 (0.00377)	--	-0.00326 (0.00318)	--
NP Debates	0.441 (0.240)	--	0.678** (0.209)	--
NP Questions	0.00490 (0.0538)	--	0.0239 (0.0308)	--
EP Press Rel.	--	0.0979** (0.0328)	--	0.0738** (0.0258)
NP Press Rel.	--	0.101 (0.215)	--	-0.306 (0.193)
FI	3.717*** (0.620)	3.703*** (0.608)	-0.158 (0.239)	-0.131 (0.231)
DE	5.036*** (0.617)	5.051*** (0.615)	0.173 (0.226)	0.352 (0.223)
TAB	-2.264*** (0.281)	-2.221*** (0.276)	-0.950*** (0.218)	-0.925*** (0.214)
Constant	-4.143*** (0.626)	-4.311*** (0.606)	-0.840*** (0.221)	-0.987*** (0.194)
Observations	630	630	630	630
Pseudo R^2	0.378	0.370	0.062	0.045

Standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; note that due to the inclusion of time lags, the number of observations is reduced by 18: 1 day per year and newspaper.

Table A12: Chapter 7: Correlations of Independent Variables in European Election Survey Dataset 2009 (p-value indicated in 2nd row)

	Support Member -ship	Support Unific.	Respon- siveness NP	Econom. Eval.	Interest in Politics	EP Awaren.	Pos. Left	Pos. Right	Age	Gender	Educ.	Exp. Visibility	Exp. Visibility * Tone	Follow Paper
Support for Unification	0.3687	1.000												
	0.0000													
Responsiveness NP	0.1842	0.2523	1.000											
	0.0000	0.0000												
Economic Evaluation	0.1117	0.0631	0.0873	1.000										
	0.0000	0.0006	0.0000											
Interest in Politics	0.2281	0.1332	0.0746	0.0350	1.000									
	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0569										
EP Awareness	0.1435	0.0988	0.0661	0.0234	0.3602	1.000								
	0.0000	0.0000	0.0003	0.2031	0.0000									
Position Left	0.0578	0.1017	-0.0177	-0.0448	0.1217	0.0404	1.000							
	0.0016	0.0000	0.3345	0.0148	0.0000	0.0270								
Position Right	0.0261	-0.0422	0.0590	0.0558	0.0424	0.0470	-0.4739	1.000						
	0.1546	0.0217	0.0013	0.0024	0.0202	0.0100	0.0000							
Age	0.0413	-0.1032	-0.0577	0.0116	0.1391	0.1311	-0.0883	0.1013	1.000					
	0.0253	0.0000	0.0018	0.5291	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000						
Gender	-0.0563	-0.0196	-0.0670	-0.0419	-0.1608	-0.0414	-0.0362	-0.0514	0.0396	1.000				
	0.0022	0.2878	0.0003	0.0226	0.0000	0.0232	0.0470	0.0048	0.0309					
Education	0.1788	0.1113	0.0453	0.0069	0.0768	0.1197	0.0976	0.0306	-0.0828	0.0540	1.000			
	0.0000	0.0000	0.0171	0.7152	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.1054	0.0000	0.0042				
Weighted Exp. (Visibility)	0.1138	0.1015	0.0078	-0.0157	0.0559	0.1793	0.0432	0.0862	-0.0024	-0.0116	0.1874	1.000		
	0.0000	0.0000	0.6769	0.4021	0.0026	0.0000	0.0199	0.0000	0.8985	0.5323	0.0000			
Weighted Exp. (Visibility*Tone)	-0.0499	-0.0438	-0.0041	0.0262	-0.0441	-0.1444	-0.0135	-0.0164	0.0062	0.0083	-0.0183	-0.4987	1.000	
	0.0075	0.0193	0.8258	0.1614	0.0175	0.0000	0.4687	0.3765	0.7417	0.6561	0.3400	0.0000		
Follow Paper	0.0723	0.0566	-0.0173	-0.0136	0.0448	0.2037	0.0384	0.0885	-0.0078	-0.0463	0.1388	0.8335	-0.3540	1.000
	0.0001	0.0025	0.3544	0.4683	0.0157	0.0000	0.0387	0.0000	0.6782	0.0127	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	
Follow TV	0.0871	0.0295	-0.0071	-0.0083	0.1566	0.1590	-0.0578	0.1086	0.3402	-0.0088	0.0035	0.1145	0.0085	0.1186
	0.0000	0.1155	0.7022	0.6555	0.0000	0.0000	0.0019	0.0000	0.0000	0.6377	0.8552	0.0000	0.6509	0.0000

Table A13: Chapter 7: Correlations of Independent Variables in European Election Survey Dataset 2014 (p-value indicated in 2nd row)

	Support Member- ship	Support Unific.	Respon- siveness NP	Econ. Eval.	Interest in Politics	EP Awaren.	Pos. Left	Pos. Right	Age	Gender	Educ.	Exp. Visibility	Exp. Visibility* Tone	Follow Paper
Support for Unification	0.4534 0.0000	1.000												
Responsiveness NP	0.3494 0.0000	0.2315 0.0000	1.000											
Economic Evaluation	-0.0246 0.1273	-0.0386 0.0195	0.0106 0.5126	1.000										
Interest in Politics	0.2501 0.0000	0.1720 0.0000	0.1630 0.0000	-0.0805 0.0000	1.000									
EP Awareness	0.2156 0.0000	0.1317 0.0000	0.2091 0.0000	0.0231 0.1491	0.4417 0.0000	1.000								
Position Left	0.1058 0.0000	0.1246 0.0000	0.0268 0.0891	-0.0423 0.0080	0.1558 0.0000	0.0727 0.0000	1.000							
Position Right	0.0305 0.0521	-0.0371 0.0220	0.1117 0.0000	0.0585 0.0002	0.1163 0.0000	0.1581 0.0000	-0.3974 0.0000	1.000						
Age	-0.0503 0.0014	-0.1144 0.0000	0.0446 0.0047	0.0169 0.2899	0.1720 0.0000	0.2324 0.0000	-0.0302 0.0514	0.0987 0.0000	1.000					
Gender	-0.0063 0.6892	-0.0108 0.5057	-0.0287 0.0687	0.0357 0.0250	-0.1816 0.0000	-0.1203 0.0000	-0.0207 0.1816	-0.0557 0.0003	-0.0235 0.1298	1.000				
Education	0.2037 0.0000	0.1795 0.0000	0.1879 0.0000	0.0518 0.0013	0.1001 0.0000	0.1140 0.0000	0.0913 0.0000	0.0609 0.0001	-0.3941 0.0000	-0.0242 0.1218	1.000			
Weighted Exposure (Visibility)	-0.0112 0.4853	-0.0157 0.3423	-0.0151 0.3474	0.0921 0.0000	-0.1285 0.0000	-0.2515 0.0000	-0.0364 0.0218	0.0027 0.8638	-0.2248 0.0000	0.0225 0.1556	0.1366 0.0000	1.000		
Weighted Exposure (Visibility*Tone)	0.0553 0.0006	0.0540 0.0011	0.0805 0.0000	-0.0430 0.0083	0.1977 0.0000	0.4246 0.0000	0.0479 0.0025	0.0716 0.0000	0.2052 0.0000	-0.0506 0.0014	-0.0222 0.1640	-0.8579 0.0000	1.000	
Follow Paper	0.1045 0.0000	0.0337 0.0377	0.1572 0.0000	0.0385 0.0158	0.2694 0.0000	0.6093 0.0000	0.0251 0.1058	0.1587 0.0000	0.2761 0.0000	-0.0840 0.0000	0.0477 0.0023	-0.5189 0.0000	0.7532 0.0000	1.000
Follow TV	0.0475 0.0025	-0.0473 0.0035	0.0690 0.0000	0.0131 0.4123	0.2020 0.0000	0.2807 0.0000	0.0065 0.6757	0.0951 0.0000	0.3271 0.0000	-0.0488 0.0016	-0.1201 0.0000	-0.1867 0.0000	0.2628 0.0000	0.3629 0.0000

Table A14: Chapter 7: Exact Wording and Scaling of Used Survey Items of the European Election Voter Studies of 2009 and 2014**2009**

Exact Wording of Survey Item	Scaling
<i>Additive index variable:</i>	1-5 (strongly (dis)agree/(dis)agree/neither nor)
- <i>EP takes citizens' concerns into consideration</i>	
- <i>You trust the EU institutions</i>	
<i>Generally speaking, do you think that the [national] membership of the EU is ...</i>	1-3 (bad/neither nor/good)
<i>Some say unification should be pushed further. Others say it has already gone too far. What is your opinion?</i>	0-10 (has gone too far/should be pushed further)
<i>The [national] parliament takes into consideration the concerns of [national] citizens.</i>	1-5 (strongly (dis)agree/(dis)agree/neither nor)
<i>Trend variable (2nd – 1st)</i>	1-5 (a lot better/a little better/stay(ed) the same/a little worse/a lot worse)
- <i>What do you think of the Economy? Compared to 12 months ago, do you think the situation is ...</i>	
- <i>And over the next 12 months, how do you think the general economic situation in this country will be?</i>	
<i>To what extent are you interested in politics?</i>	1-4 (not at all/a little/somewhat/very)
<i>In a typical week, how often do you read newspapers?</i>	0-7 days
<i>In a typical week, how often do you follow TV news?</i>	0-7 days
<i>How often did you read about the election in a newspaper during the four weeks before the elections?</i>	1-3 (never/often/sometimes)
<i>How often did you watch a program about the election on TV during the four weeks before elections?</i>	1-3 (never/often/sometimes)
<i>In political matters people talk of 'the left' and 'the right'. What is your position?</i>	0=left, 10=right

2014

Exact Wording of Survey Item	Scaling
<i>Additive index variable:</i>	1-4 (No, not at all/No, not really/Yes, to some extent/Yes, definitely)
- <i>EP takes citizens' concerns into consideration</i>	
- <i>You trust the EU institutions</i>	
<i>Generally speaking, do you think that the [national] membership of the EU is ...</i>	1-3 (bad/neither nor/good)
<i>Some say unification should be pushed further. Others say it has already gone too far. What is your opinion?</i>	1-11 (has already gone too far/should be pushed further)
<i>The [national] parliament takes the concerns of [national] citizens into consideration.</i>	1-4 (No, not at all/No, not really/Yes, to some extent/Yes, definitely)
<i>Trend variable (2nd – 1st)</i>	1-5 (a lot better/a little better/stay(ed) the same/a little worse/a lot worse)
- <i>What do you think of the Economy? Compared to 12 months ago, do you think the situation is ...</i>	
- <i>And over the next 12 months, how do you think the general economic situation in this country will be?</i>	
<i>You are very interested in politics.</i>	1-4 (No, not at all/No, not really/Yes, to some extent/Yes, definitely)
<i>How often do you follow the news in newspapers?</i>	1-6 (never/less often/once a week/several times a week/every day or almost every day)
<i>How often do you follow the news on TV?</i>	1-6 (never/less often/once a week/several times a week/every day or almost every day)
<i>How often did you read about the election in a newspaper during the four weeks before the elections?</i>	1-3 (never/often/sometimes)
<i>How often did you watch a program about the election on TV during the four weeks before elections?</i>	1-3 (never/often/sometimes)
<i>In political matters people talk of 'the left' and 'the right'. What is your position?</i>	0=left, 10=right

Table A15: Chapter 7: Overview of Results from Jack-knife Test (only significant effects indicated)

Pooled Model	2009				2014			
	Follow Paper	Follow TV	Visibility	Visibility *Tone	Follow Paper	Follow TV	Visibility	Visibility *Tone
EP Awareness								+
Interaction term 1			+					
Political Interest					+			+
Interaction term 2								
Without UK 2009								
EP Awareness	- **		-#			+		
Interaction term 1								
Political Interest	- *		-#		+	+		+
Interaction term 2		+						
Without DE 2009								
EP Awareness							-#	+
Interaction term 1			+					
Political Interest					+		- *	+
Interaction term 2						+		
Without FI 2009								
EP Awareness	-#				+		- *	+
Interaction term 1				- *				
Political Interest	-#				+	+	- **	+
Interaction term 2						+		

Table A16: Chapter 7: Population Parameters for Country Samples Regarding Different Exposure Measures

	2009					2014				
	Exposure Visibility*Tone									
	Obs	Mean	Std.	Min	Max	Obs	Mean	Std.	Min	Max
FI	959	-.0821387	1.259.541	-4.075.209	2.274.946	1073	.0857445	.8364958	-2.953.006	.9299114
DE	948	.2063987	.350116	-3.577.501	.2791114	1532	.2660593	.8612538	-2.638.644	1.082.877
UK	996	-.1173644	1.100.721	-10.261.720	.2791114	1375	-.3633504	1.143.107	-2.638.644	.8045559
	Exposure Visibility									
	Obs	Mean	Std.	Min	Max	Obs	Mean	Std.	Min	Max
FI	959	.6156512	1.364.992	-.5501009	5.579.586	1073	.2408034	1.045.751	-1.029.299	3.210.277
DE	948	-.3145588	.6111773	-.5501009	4.623.814	1532	-.3278444	.919604	-1.029.299	3.391.326
UK	996	-.2933816	.470532	-.5501009	3.387.681	1375	.1773641	.9506785	-1.029.299	2.030.437
	Raw Measure TV (How often do you follow TV News?)									
	Obs	Mean	Std.	Min	Max	Obs	Mean	Std.	Min	Max
FI	973	.2022049	.9111991	-1.338.432	1.688.621	1096	.1579996	.8381307	-3.168.413	.5246059
DE	935	.2541815	1.114.352	-1.338.432	4.715.674	1646	.0336991	.9467648	-3.168.413	.5246059
UK	989	-.4392362	.8036762	-1.338.432	1.688.621	1417	-.1613521	1.142.454	-3.168.413	.5246059
	Raw Measure Newspapers (How often do you follow Newspapers?)									
	Obs	Mean	Std.	Min	Max	Obs	Mean	Std.	Min	Max
FI	959	.4746683	119.471	-.6739579	4.665.664	1095	.3805208	.7471341	-1.795.701	.8287075
DE	948	-.2856459	.7441169	-.6739579	3.723.378	1647	.0447311	.9855948	-1.795.701	.8287075
UK	996	-.1851549	.8283205	-.6739579	4.665.664	1418	-.3457987	106.857	-1.795.701	.8287075

Abstract

The thesis focusses on the legitimation of the European Parliament (EP) via the mass media. Parliament as the core institution of representative democracy has a prominent status in the discussion about the European Union's democratic deficit. With growing Euroscepticism, however, the question arises if and how the EP can fulfil its function as central source of legitimacy for EU politics. In this context, the role of national parliaments is increasingly discussed.

Departing from the central assumption that mass media serve as diffuser of political communication and constitute a platform for disputing and evaluating the legitimacy of the EP, the thesis assesses the general quality of newspaper contents as well as the newsworthiness of the EP in comparison to national parliaments; in addition, a media effects analysis is conducted. Analyses aim at contributing to the tackling of identified research gaps in the political science discussion about the EP's legitimacy.

The project sheds light on the proposed research questions by looking into the three largest newspapers in Finland, Germany, and the United Kingdom relying on a manual content analysis. As research periods, the EP elections 2009 and 2014 as well as routine periods in 2011 and 2012 are used. The methodological framework is designed in a quantitative-deductive fashion using different statistical tools for analysis. In addition, the thesis uses external data, such as the European Election Survey and data from the PACE (Parliamentary Communication of Europe) project which deals with communication by and about national parliaments in EU affairs.

In conclusion, the visibility of the EP – and, therefore, its legitimizing potential, seems very limited especially during non-election times. Results of earlier research which found a strong national bias in EU coverage more generally are confirmed. Furthermore, national parliaments seem to be more newsworthy in the eyes of newsmakers and may be a better source of legitimacy. Weak effects of coverage in 2009 are found, however only for citizens

that had reported to remember reading about the EP in the news. In 2014, obviously mostly due to the increased contestation of the EU in times of crisis, effects became direct and no longer moderated by political interest. Thus, contents are found to reach people in 2014, but due to the great negativity in the discourse, they seem to contribute to a de-legitimation rather than increase the EP's public support in public.

Regarding the EU's democratic deficit, the EP's potential to help legitimate EU politics seems quite limited. The thesis, therefore, reflects upon the possibility of a division of labour between parliamentary levels: NPs could focus stronger on communicating EU affairs to the domestic audience due to their greater newsworthiness while the EP could focus more on controlling tasks at the supranational level. Thus, in strengthening parliamentarism as such in the EU, the 'democratic mirage' that has been nourished for so long by the image of a strong EP, would maybe have the chance to become real.

Zusammenfassung

Die Arbeit analysiert die Legitimation des Europäischen Parlamentes (EP) über die Massenmedien. Das Parlament als Kerninstitution der repräsentativen Demokratie hat eine besondere Stellung in der Diskussion um das Demokratiedefizit der Europäischen Union (EU). Insbesondere steht mit wachsendem Euroskeptizismus immer drängender die Frage im Raum, inwiefern das EP seine Funktion als Legitimationsquelle für Europäische Politik erfüllt und erfüllen kann. In diesem Zusammenhang ist in den letzten Jahren zunehmend auch die Rolle nationaler Parlamente in EU-Angelegenheiten diskutiert worden.

Ausgehend von der zentralen Annahme, dass Massenmedien die Vermittlung politischer Kommunikation zukommt und sie damit eine Plattform für die Bewertung und Auseinandersetzung mit der Legitimität des Parlaments darstellen, wird in der Arbeit die generelle Qualität von Zeitungsinhalten untersucht; zusätzlich wird der vergleichende Neuigkeitswert von EP und nationalen Parlamenten in EU-Angelegenheiten beleuchtet sowie eine Analyse von Medieneffekten vorgenommen. Diese Analysen zielen darauf ab, zur Schließung von identifizierten Forschungslücken in der politikwissenschaftlichen Diskussion zur Legitimität des EP beizutragen.

Das Projekt beleuchtet diese Fragen in den jeweils drei größten Tageszeitungen in drei EU-Mitgliedstaaten (Finnland, Deutschland, Großbritannien), deren Inhalte zum EP über eine manuelle Inhaltsanalyse erhoben wurden. Als Forschungszeiträume werden einerseits die Europa-Wahlen 2009 und 2014 und andererseits Routineperioden in 2011 und 2012 untersucht. In methodischer Hinsicht ist die Arbeit quantitativ-deduktiv aufgebaut und bedient sich verschiedener statistischer Analyseverfahren zur Auswertung der erhobenen Daten. Das Projekt nutzt zudem externe Datenquellen wie den European Election Survey und den Datensatz des Projektes PACE (Parliamentary Communication of Europe), das sich auf die Kommunikation von und über nationale Parlamente in EU-Angelegenheiten konzentriert.

Im Ergebnis scheinen die Sichtbarkeit des EP, und damit sein Legitimationspotenzial, besonders zu Nicht-Wahl-Zeiten, teilweise extrem eingeschränkt. Zusätzlich bestätigen die Analysen die Ergebnisse früherer Studien zur EU generell, in denen ein starker nationaler Fokus in der EU-Berichterstattung ausgemacht wurde. Nationale Parlamente weisen außerdem in den Augen von JournalistInnen einen höheren Neuigkeitswert auf. Sie wären daher eventuell besser als Quellen für die Legitimation von EU-Politik geeignet. Effekte von Berichterstattung werden in 2009 nur für Bürger festgestellt, die ein generelles Interesse am EP haben; durch eine durch die Finanzkrise erhöhte Salienz der EU als öffentliches Thema verändert sich dieses Bild für die Wahl 2014, in der Effekte direkt und nicht mehr vom politischen Interesse der Bürger moderiert werden. So scheinen Inhalte die Bürger zu erreichen, gleichzeitig aber durch starke Negativität im Diskurs zur De-Legitimation des Parlaments beizutragen.

Mit Hinblick auf das Demokratiedefizit der EU scheint das EP damit nur begrenzt in der Lage zu sein, die Legitimität von EU-Politik zu erhöhen. Abschließend gibt die Arbeit daher den Denkanstoß, dass eine Arbeitsteilung von EP und nationalen Parlamenten von Nutzen sein könnte. National Parlamente könnten entsprechend ihrem höheren Neuigkeitswert stärker die Kommunikation europäischer Themen in Angriff nehmen, während das EP sich mehr auf parlamentarische Kontrollfunktionen konzentrieren würde. Durch die Stärkung des Parlamentarismus als solchem in der EU hätte damit das ‚demokratische Trugbild‘, das jahrzehntelang von der Vorstellung eines starken EP genährt wurde, eventuell die Chance, Wirklichkeit zu werden.